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THE ENGLISH BIBLE AS A GUIDE TO WRITING

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THE ENGLISH BIBLE AS A GUIDE TO WRITING

(Formerly published under the title *How to Write*)

BY

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To My Mother

WHO TAUGHT ME THE BIBLE

8651

PREFACE

The importance of the English Bible as a model of style has been often felt, often expressed, but never, apparently, realised in systematic, practical application. Thus to apply it to the practical end of learning to write cannot obscure or belittle its importance for other ends. Rather, the one should help the other, as in the study of the Old Testament by the writers of the New. But all that this book presumes to teach from the Bible is how to write.

The English Bible which is a part of English literature is the King James translation. This is the Bible that has passed into our literary and our common speech. It is what we mean when we talk of the style of the Bible. Therefore it is the version quoted throughout the following pages. Though most of these pages apply to any

good version, wherever they speak of the choice of words they refer to the Authorised Version. Where this text has been modified in any least particular, the object is, not emendation in any sense, but merely clearness to modern readers. The changes are mainly in punctuation, in which the usage of the time of King James was less settled than ours to-day. Other changes are very few and very slight, and are always indicated. If any one of them has led to a misreading, correction from the more expert will be accepted as a favour. At the same time it should be evident that exegesis, as it is no part of the object, can make no material difference in the results. And the book is still farther from theology. It touches no doctrines but the doctrines of good writing. These, indeed, may be a part of morality; but they are equally sanctioned by all faiths.

C. S. B.

New Haven,
Christmas, 1904.

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INTRODUCTION

THIS book shows how to gain a practical skill. Skill in writing gives two things: first, better command over one's fellows; second, better command over oneself; that is, first, influence, and second, education. More people might gain this skill if they knew that the ways were open. One way especially ought to be more familiar. Of how many professional writers is it recorded that they learned their trade in great part from the English Bible? Bunyan, of course, knew hardly any other book. His *Pilgrim's Progress*, which has been read by almost as many people as the Bible itself, came clear and strong in the words and ways that he had learned from the Bible alone. Now his case differs from others only in degree. Fifty other English men of letters have used

the same means, though less largely, still, largely enough.

But this handbook is not for professional writers. It is for plain people. Not only men of letters have learned from the Bible how to write, but men of law too, and men of business. In the days when books in this country were few, and libraries fewer, the one Book had to serve as guide, not only in religion, but also in expression. Nowadays more people skim over fifty books and a thousand newspapers and magazines than pore over one. Does this modern habit seem to make men more ready in expressing themselves, or less? Though the Bible is no longer alone on the shelf, it is still everybody's most convenient example. Since the easiest of books to have at hand has been found in the experience of so many and so different men the best of models for learning how to write, it cannot be set aside without folly.

How are models to be used in learning to write? And, practically, how is the Bible

to be used, not only by men of literary hopes to learn literary expression, but by plain men to learn plain expression? The question has many aspects. It turns into many questions of detail. But practically it keeps coming up in four main problems:—

1. *How to fix the attention on one point.*
2. *How to take hold.*
3. *How to go on.*
4. *How to bring home.*

To solve these problems practically from the Bible is the object of this book.

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CHAPTER I

HOW TO PREPARE A SPEECH

(Based on the *Book of the Acts of the Apostles*)

A. HOW TO SET ABOUT PREPARING A SPEECH

The great practical object of saying one's mind is to lead people to do a given thing at a given time. The great practical way to do this has always been to make a speech. True, in our modern time of newspapers a great deal of this work is done by print; but a printed appeal, though it is wider, is less strong; for we all know, speakers and hearers alike, that no print moves us like the human voice. The greatest practical achievement of expression is still, and always will be, a great message by a great speaker.

Now the story of the Book of the Acts is of various efforts on various audiences and by various speakers toward one single purpose — what we now commonly call conversion. Whatever else we may think of this object, we understand it. We know unmistakably what it is. No other purpose in all history has so often compelled speakers to single-minded speaking. Because their object is so clear, and so compelling upon them, and so common from their time to ours, we can study in their speeches most readily the means of persuasion.

THE MARS' HILL SPEECH

(By St. Paul, to the Athenians; Acts xvii. 22)

Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in 22
all things ye are too superstitious. For, 23
as I passed by and beheld your devotions,
I found an altar with this inscription, TO
THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom, therefore,
ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto
you. God that made the world and all 24
things therein, seeing that he is Lord of
heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples
made with hands, neither is worshipped 25
with men's hands as though he needed
anything, seeing he giveth to all life and
breath and all things. And (he) hath 26
made of one blood all nations of men
for to dwell on all the face of the
earth, (having) determined the times be-
fore appointed and the bounds of their
habitation, that they should seek the Lord, 27
if haply they might feel after him and find
him — though he be not far from every
one of us. For in him we live and move
and have our being; as certain also of
your own poets have said, For we are also
his offspring. Forasmuch, then, as we are 29
the offspring of God, we ought not to

think that the Godhead is like unto gold or silver or stone graven by art and man's device. (And) the times of (this) ignorance 30
God winked at, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent; because he 31
hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained. (Of this) he hath given assurance unto all men in that he hath raised him from the dead.

I. Fixing One Point

The object of this speech is single — God has made a revelation of himself, clear and binding. The object of every good speech is single. The first thing for speaking is to know precisely what you want, and, without turning aside, to work for that. The gist of every good talk will go into one sentence. You propose to talk on labour troubles, on high schools, or good roads. Why? Because you hold: Arbitration should be compulsory, — Our high schools are a just charge on the public treasury, — Gravel roads are good enough for my town. Until you can put it into a complete sentence, you do not sufficiently know your object. And how shall you impress upon your hearers what is vague in your own mind? So the purpose of every good speech, whether of five minutes or an hour, will go into one sentence. Until singleness of purpose is assured in this way, the preparation has not gone far. The speech is not thought through.

Many things the apostle had to consider, standing there on Mars' Hill: the people, the place, the time; but one thing above all, the object. That controlled all the others, giving him the power of an absorbing idea. "Do not speak until you have something to say" means practically, Be sure that all you say can be summed up in one sentence. For that is the practical test of whether you have the only sufficient warrant for speaking at a given time at all — being possessed by one idea.

II. Taking Hold

But it was a long way from that object of the apostle's to that audience. How to bring them there! "For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing." As for strictly amending their lives to accord with divine revelation, he knew that was far from their thoughts. Very modern in many ways, they were in none more so than in preferring novel talk

about the conduct of life to any strict practice of such conduct. But they prided themselves on their open minds. They welcomed new views as stimulating and entertaining. They were ready to hear anything — anything new. All this the poor, unknown speaker in that ancient city square knew; for he knew his audience.

That is the next thing. The first thing is to know your object as definitely one; the next thing is to know your audience. Knowledge of the audience is the only thing that tells how to take hold. When this apostle harangued the mob of Jews from the stairs (Acts xxii. 1), he began: "Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defence." When he stood before Felix (Acts xxiv. 10), he introduced the answer to his accusers by words at once courteous and significant: "Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself." When he faced these curious, speculative Athenians, he did neither. He began neither

with appeal nor with courtesy. He began with direct attack. Was it not amazing for a Jew to open on an audience of Greeks with the flat announcement: "Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are over-religious"? "Over-religious? Too much religion?" they may well have said to themselves. "We expected him to accuse us of too little." It was a surprise, a shock. So it caught their attention and augmented their curiosity.

But it was no mere shock of surprise, this beginning. It also had its direct bearing on the end. It was neither a trick nor a false start. It reminds us that attention should be caught at once, but that attention should at the same time be directed. The startling words make a distinct step, as we shall see, toward the goal. This becomes clearer as we examine the next sentence: "For, as I passed by and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscrip tion, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD." Here is another suggestion for taking hold. Begin

with something familiar to the audience, especially with something on the spot. But this familiar illustration, this altar that they all knew, was not something outside his purpose, caught up to tickle their ears. It was to be turned to new meaning; and this new meaning was a vital part of his object. For the first word of that inscription goes far to sum up the first part of his speech, and the last word to sum up its conclusion. He is unknown? Then you must know him. He is God? Then you must obey him. "Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you." The clinching sentence of the introduction renews the shock in its assertiveness and in its bold word "ignorantly"; and at the same time it rebukes their easy trifling, and expresses the apostle's unflinching obedience to truth.

Taking hold of course implies keeping hold. Knowing the audience, and how their attention is to be caught and directed, implies remembering the audience, keeping touch with them; and this determines the whole

tone or style. To Jewish audiences the apostle used Jewish history; to the superstitious Lycaonians (Acts xiv. 15), when they were for worshipping his powers, the simplest statement of one Creator as a living benefactor: "We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein. In times past (he) suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." To the intellectual Athenians he put much the same message into very close reasoning. A despised Jew, he opened as a broad, philosophical consideration the brotherhood of man; and at the same time showed his intellectual kinship with them by quoting one of their poets. All through we feel the tone or style as adapted to the audience, and yet, as in the

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way of beginning, adapted without unmanly or insincere concession. For if the tone should be that of your audience, it must still remain that of yourself, or you will not be worth hearing at all. In short, take hold means: Know your audience; catch their attention at once, but at the same time direct it at once toward your end; by appeal to something familiar and by suiting your style to your hearers, adapt yourself, but let the something familiar be also significant, and let the adaptation be without concession.

III. Going On

Both fixing one point and taking hold imply preparation. When they come on the spur of the moment it is only to speakers that by long practice can seize them at once, or who choose a topic already thought out. Still more is preparation necessary for going on. The idea that a flow of words worth hearing comes from mere gift of gab is mainly wrong. Ease, freedom to watch the audience, seeing whether they under-

stand and follow, leading their feeling as well as their thought, come, not when the speaker has to beat his brains for the next thing, but when he cannot forget what the next thing is, and the next, and the next, because he has them arranged in his head. And to the audience a speech seems to flow naturally when one thing leads to another, when it has what we call a line of thought. Now few of us think offhand in lines — none of us without much practice in thinking on our feet, none of us very often even then. A line of thought comes from putting a great deal of disorderly thinking into order. We reject this, decide to put first, perhaps, what we thought of second, to put last, as the main point, what we thought of first. Very likely we assure ourselves by jotting down notes, making an outline or plan. At any rate, whether written or unwritten, the plan must be there before the speech will go on.

For a plan is nothing more than an ordinary precaution against rambling in speech as we ramble in our first thoughts. If you

ramble aloud before an audience, be sure their minds will ramble, too — in different directions. If, on the contrary, you succeed in holding them to your thought and feeling, if they follow you, it will be largely because you have thought out and tested a line that compels them to follow. The words may come offhand, but not the order of ideas, or rather not unless there is already an order of ideas. What makes speeches halt is never so much lack of just the right word as it is lack of a plan to show what should come next.

There is the rub — the labour, the revision, days of work, perhaps, for what can at last be put down on a little card, or need not be put down at all because it is so simple and natural. It ought to be simple and natural; and it will not be unless it is made so. Follow the order of this Mars' Hill speech: —

(1) Your approach toward God is unenlightened.

(2) God is the Creator.

(3) God has created all men to seek him.

(4) We must all seek him as his creatures.

(5) Therefore we are not free to use the symbols of half-knowledge.

(6) For God, having revealed himself, holds us responsible to act in conformity with his revelation.

(7) And this binding revelation of God as Lord of life is in the risen Man.

That seems simple and natural because it is well thought out.

And it really goes on. It does not merely go through a list of things which might be gone through in another order. To change the order would be to spoil the speech. The order is vital. Each point leads toward the next and, through the next, toward the end. Nothing is said about the order; there is no "first," "secondly," "thirdly"; but we cannot escape it. It takes us along. This is what is meant by "line of thought," "chain of proof," "steps in the argument." All those common phrases mean one thing, —a prepared connection of thought.

Indeed, the order of thoughts may be as important as the thoughts themselves. Each of the thoughts of this speech comes out more sharply because of the thought next to it, because of its connection. And the whole speech seems not so much like thought added to thought as like thought multiplied by thought. So the best speeches have an order that increases their force as they go on.

IV. Bringing Home

The outline above shows how the Mars' Hill speech went on, not how it went home. No mere summary of the order, however strong that order may be, can express how the speaker felt, how he moved his audience to feel. A speech means a living personality felt by hearers in a living world of men. It is never merely a nice set of propositions. It must be felt humanly, or it fails as a speech. What part of the speech before Agrippa (Acts xxvi) is most easily recalled? "I would to God that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both

almost and altogether such as I am — *except these bonds.*" Why? Because we feel so humanly that glance at the gyves, seeming almost to see it. Now when a speaker gives his audience something to see, he helps them to feel with him. This speech, like many others in the Bible and out, has to touch on matters abstract. To state the abstract in clear order might be enough for the reading of pure intellects; it is not enough for the hearing of men and women. The audience might, perhaps, understand; but it might not care. Indeed, it is doubtful if we commonly even understand until we feel.

So the speeches of the Bible, being of real men to real men, take great pains to win sympathy. That is persuasion; not mere reasoning, for we are not mere reasoners; not mere feeling either, for we are not mere savages; but both together, and one through the other. Sometimes, indeed, a speech may appeal only to one. The rebuke of King David by the prophet Nathan (2 Samuel xii) was

simply a piteous story to move the king's generous anger against a cruel wrong, and then a sudden charging of that wrong upon the king himself — "Thou art the man." The case was exceptional and extreme. David was a good man suddenly perverted by blinding passion. He needed no logic, no proof. His mind knew; but his body had rebelled. Usually, every speech needs both the reasoning and the feeling to drive it home.

Now the feeling is touched, the abstract is livened, as has been hinted, by using words that put us in the speaker's place. We feel with him when we seem to see and hear, to smell and taste, with him. "The poor man," said Nathan, "had nothing save one little ewe lamb . . . it grew up with him and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom." We see it. The concrete details put a picture before our eyes. Now to be as pictorial as that does not always suit the case; but any case usually demands at least something of that sort.

For the pastoral Jewish king a parable was enough in itself; for the sceptical Greeks on Mars' Hill it would not have been enough; but something of the sort was used. Some illustration, much expression of abstract ideas in concrete language, he used even to them, and to other audiences much more. His text was the altar out there, with its inscription that they had seen. His language, like the habitual language of the great preaching Hebrew prophets, was not mere scientific precision, but lively imagery: "dwelleth not in temples made with hands," "made of one blood all nations," "if haply they might feel after him," "gold or silver or stone." Much more of this sort he may well have said; for what we have here seems rather a full summary than a full report. The record of St. Stephen's speech (Acts vii) sounds like a verbatim report; the record of this speech of St. Paul sounds more like a digest. And the difference is precisely in this matter of bringing home.

The point will be clearer from other speeches, less intellectual and less condensed, quoted on later pages. Meantime it is clear why so many speeches make large use of stories and description. It is because thus they can arouse feeling, can make an audience not merely comprehend, but sympathise, can bring the point home. The speech of the young martyr Stephen (Acts vii) is almost entirely narrative, not story merely to please the imagination, but history so presented as to make the imagination plead as well as the reason. The great figure of Moses, type to his audience of Jewish law and Jewish history, he held up in vital significance, that he might passionately apply it to the fundamental relations of divine plan to human conduct. The passion would not have been so moving if it had not called up picture after picture. Very similar in method is St. Paul's speech on the stairs (Acts xxii); and his speech before Agrippa (Acts xxvi) is not only narrative, but narrative about himself.

But before drawing other lessons from the use of narrative in speeches, it is important to observe in this Mars' Hill speech something else about bringing home. Bringing home is also application; in other words, it is a way of closing which (1) applies the point (2) to the hearers. The conclusion is not merely that God has indeed revealed himself, but that these Athenians, like every one else, will be judged accordingly. The closing reference to the resurrection is not merely a great general argument; it touches on the speculation of some of the most rapt and daring of Greek philosophers, especially Socrates. And, like Socrates, the apostle urges its strict bearing on conduct — "now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." To bring a speech home is so to close it that the audience feels its point as something for them to do. They see that the close is the point, the result of the whole. They see that it follows. But, more than this, they feel that they themselves have followed, and that the point is for them. They may re-

fuse it; they may balk ("When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked; and others said, We will hear thee again of this"); but they know clearly what it is, and feel that it is for them. To bring a speech home to an audience, then, is to win their sympathy all through it, and at the end to apply it to their own conduct.

B. WHAT A SPEECH CONSISTS OF

The two things that go to make up most speeches are seen quite simply in St. Peter's speech to the council (Acts xi). "When Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them." So St. Peter made his defence, first by telling the facts — "I was in the city of Joppa praying," etc.; secondly, by arguing from these facts — "Forasmuch, then, as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us . . . what was I that I could withstand God?" Statement of

the facts, argument from the facts, these two things lie at the bottom of most speeches. They may be done variously; they may be variously combined. In this speech of St. Peter's they are quite separate; in St. Paul's Mars' Hill speech they can hardly be distinguished. But, in whatever form, both are usually essential.

I. Statement of Facts

St. Peter's statement, though at first it seems merely simple narrative, has another merit. It is very concise. It is brought within two or three minutes by omitting details that do not bear on the point. A fuller narrative of these same events is given in the preceding chapter. In the speech here the apostle confines himself to what bears on the issue between himself and his accusers. He is very carefully accurate; he neither overstates nor understates; but at the same time he makes his statement an introduction to his argument. And this he does, not only by omitting, but by stressing. His argu-

ment is single and simple — "I obeyed a new revelation." It goes into one verse. But all through his preceding statement he is preparing for this argument by so telling the facts as to show the hand of God. His statement is almost argument enough. Now though the statement of facts rarely does so much of the whole work of a speech, its effectiveness always depends on these same qualities: (1) simple clearness, (2) accuracy, (3) conciseness, (4) direction toward the end of the argument.

The speech of St. Paul in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia (Acts xiii. 16–41) shows these points more fully and at the same time more variously.

SPEECH OF ST. PAUL TO THE JEWS IN THE SYNAGOGUE AT ANTIOCH IN PISIDIA

Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, 16
give audience. The God of this people 17
of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted
the people when they dwelt as strangers
in the land of Egypt; and with an high
arm brought he them out of it. And 18
about the time of forty years suffered he
their manners in the wilderness. And 19
when he had destroyed seven nations in
the land of Chanaan, he divided their land
to them by lot. And after that he gave 20
unto them judges about the space of four
hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the
Prophet. And afterward they desired a 21
king; and God gave unto them Saul the
son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin,
by the space of forty years. And when 22
he had removed him, he raised up unto
them David to be their king; to whom
also he gave testimony, and said, I have
found David the son of Jesse, a man after
mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my
will. Of this man's seed hath God 23
according to his promise raised unto Israel
a Saviour, Jesus, when John had first 24

preached before his coming the baptism
of repentance to all the people of Israel.
And as John fulfilled his course, he said, 25
Whom think ye that I am? I am not he.
But, behold, there cometh one after me
whose shoes of his feet I am not worthy
to loose.

Men and brethren, children of the stock 26
of Abraham, and whosoever among you
feareth God, to you is the word of this
salvation sent. For they that dwell at 27
Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they
knew him not, nor yet the voices of the
prophets which are read every sabbath
day, (they) have fulfilled them in con-
demning him. And though they found 28
no cause of death in him, yet desired they
Pilate that he should be slain. And when 29
they had fulfilled all that was written of
him, they took him down from the tree,
and laid him in a sepulchre. But God 30
raised him from the dead. And he was 31
seen many days of them which came up
with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who
are his witnesses unto the people. And 32
we declare unto you glad tidings, how
that the promise which was made unto
the fathers God hath fulfilled (the same) 33

unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. And as 34
concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. Wherefore he 35
saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. For David, after he had served his 36
own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption. But he whom God 37
raised again saw no corruption.

Be it known unto you therefore, men 38
and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins. And by him all that believe are justified 39
from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. Beware, 40
therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets: Behold, ye 41
despisers, and wonder, and perish; for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.

In order to examine more closely the force of the statement in this speech, and also to assist the review that should be made through it of the lessons drawn from the Mars' Hill speech, hints are added here for an outline. These should be expanded into a careful outline in sentences like the one on page 16.

HINTS FOR AN OUTLINE

The Meaning of Jewish History and Prophecy

(1) Statement of facts (17–25), summary of Jewish history.

(2) Direct personal appeal to the vital concern of the audience as children of the prophets (26).

(3) Appeal from their present leaders as perverted by ignorance and hardness of heart (27–29).

(4) As against this ignoring, testimony to the fact of the resurrection (30, 31).

(5) General application of this fact as a joyous fulfilment of Jewish history (32, 33).

(6) Citation of authority for this interpretation (33–37).

(7) Particular application to what his hearers should therefore do, by warning against the error to which their history had shown them most liable — despising the revelation of God.

Note in review that the order is just as logical, just as progressive from point to point, as in the Mars' Hill speech. The apostle was speaking to a less intellectual audience of provincial Jews. His method was more historical because to these men that would be more appealing than the general philosophical ideas that he put before the Athenians. The object is the same. The aim of all St. Paul's speeches is, Repent. The application is of the Hebrew prophets to these particular Hebrews.

Now to go on with the statement of facts, the facts here were familiar. They had been told and retold in the Jewish historical scriptures, rehearsed and applied over

and over again in well-known psalms and prophecies. As each man in the synagogue, according to custom, might select from this familiar store something for comment, the apostle was free to select. But his selection, brief as he made it, is complete for its purpose. It is complete from one point of view. It exhibits vividly the continuity and the progress of the divine revelation through chosen men — the chosen nation, the judges, the king desired by the people, the king chosen of God, the promised Saviour of his lineage, the forerunner preaching the preparation of repentance. Compare with this the much longer statement (Acts vii) made for a similar purpose by St. Stephen. St. Paul's is the more concise; but both select from the long story what is vital to the one purpose of the one speech.

To his rapid summary of the general trend of undisputed history the speaker immediately joins the recent events that were in dispute, that in fact made the very issue. There is no break between his statement and

his argument. One is led straight into the other. The statement, indeed, like St. Peter's, is itself argumentative. Statement and argument alike aim to show the culmination of history in the Messiah. Yet the statement remains fairly a statement. The hearers are left to make their own inferences up to the climax of the line of instances. John the Baptist is meant to be thought of as the last of this line of forerunners; but the hearers are left to think that for themselves. Just before, the apostle asserts the final fulfilment. Adding the testimony of the voice crying in the wilderness, he seems to pause at that moment of suspense, and then to break in with the direct appeal: "Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent." At the same moment the statement is brought to a climax and the direct argument is begun.

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II. Argument or Proof

It is plain from the outline that the speaker is trying to make his hearers accept a certain interpretation of their national history and act upon it. "Our history," he is urging, "has culminated in the Messiah. Purge yourselves to follow him." Trying first to make them feel what the facts meant to them, — "to you is the word of this salvation sent," — he then begins his direct argument by meeting an objection. Their rulers had rejected Jesus. But that, says the apostle, does not prove that he was not the Messiah; for it is just what the old prophets foretold, and it is just the mistake that we have been making throughout our history — not recognising the evident voice of God. The very manner of his death was as it was written. Moreover, either their judgment or their sincerity was at fault; for they urged his death in spite of his evident innocence.

(*a*) TEST OF THE BEARING OF ARGUMENTS

So the first main argument amounts to this: —

The rejection of the rulers does not vitiate the Messiahship of Jesus.

1. For it fulfilled prophecy.
2. For it was either blind or jealous.
   (*a*) For the prophetic signs were plain in him.
   (*b*) For they found no cause of death in him.

Here is a very convenient device for seeing exactly what an argument amounts to. Set down in a sentence the point to be proved or disproved. Set down beneath, each in a sentence, the points used to prove or disprove it; and beneath any of these the points used to prove or disprove them. The device may be made quite simple, or, by putting in all the minor points, very elaborate. Carried out for a whole speech, by writing the point of the whole at the top, under that

the main points in direct proof of that, under each of these the points in proof of them, and so on, it may be made a complete chart or skeleton. When the argument is at all complicated, such a chart is often used in preparation, to avoid crookedness or confusion.

The apostle's first argument is negative. It is a reply to a probable objection. It is what is often called rebuttal. His next argument is positive: "God raised him from the dead." We apostles are witnesses of this great fact. Then, affirming directly and reënforcing the argument implied in his preliminary statement, he argued thirdly that this resurrection was the crowning fulfilment of prophecy, by citing the prophets to support him. The rest of the speech is application. A complete chart would be like this:—

CHART OR BRIEF OF ST. PAUL'S ARGUMENT AT ANTIOCH

Obey Jesus as the Messiah

(A. *Statement of facts.*)

B. *For the rejection of the rulers does not vitiate his claim*

1. For this very rejection fulfilled prophecy.
2. For it was either blind or jealous.
   (*a*) For it ignored the evident prophetic signs in him.
   (*b*) For his conviction had no lawful ground.

C. *For God raised him from the dead.*

1. For "he was seen many days" after his death by his disciples.
   (*a*) For these disciples are constantly testifying in public to this fact.

D. *For his resurrection fulfils Messianic prophecy.*

1. For prophecy announces the Messiah as divine.

(*a*) For the second psalm speaks of him as the Son of God.

2. For prophecy specifically foretells his resurrection.

(*a*) For another psalm says, "Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption."

(*b*) And this cannot refer to David.

1. For David saw corruption.

(E. *Application.*)

(*b*) THE MAIN WAYS OF ARGUING

The chart or brief shows what the arguments are, and how they depend one on another. It is worth while to observe further that they all follow one or the other of two ways of arguing: (1) argument from the general store of previous knowledge, (2) argument from particular evidence as to the case in hand. For these are the two fundamental ways of reasoning. The former, argument from previous knowledge and reflection, is called deductive (in Latin, *a priori*); the latter, argument from investiga-

tion, is called inductive. Both these ways of reasoning are good; both are commonly necessary. Which shall have the preference in a given case depends on that case and that audience. The apostle here spent most of his time on the former, probably because he knew that his audience needed less to have the facts further established by testimony than to feel the relation of these facts to the principles and views of history that they already held. He seems to feel that his opportunity was less to make them admit certain facts than to make them feel the significance.

In his application the apostle uses a particular kind of deductive reasoning. Your ancestors, he says, fell again and again into one great error. They failed again and again to recognise and obey God's spokesmen to them. Therefore your great danger is likely to be the same. "Beware, therefore, lest that come upon you." This way is called argument by analogy. It is found in other parts of this speech.

Deduction, induction, analogy — it is not at all important to remember these technical terms of logic. What is important is in preparation to try all these ways, and to use most what seems most apt to the purpose and the audience. See what use you can make of deductive reasoning from the general ideas, beliefs, and principles held by your audience; to what extent you must establish by inductive proof the necessary and vital facts; and whether by analogy you can effectively argue from history.

C. HOW TO DEBATE

As often as not, a speech is a reply to another speech. This does not make it essentially different; but it does demand a special skill. A debater, after all, has a speech to make; but he cannot make it as he would by himself. He has to gauge it, not merely to the way in which the subject will probably be viewed by the audience, but to the way in which the subject has actually

been viewed by an opponent. Therefore a good deal of the form must be adopted off-hand. Not the arguments, — for the preparation must cover every point that an opponent can fairly bring forward, — but the stress that is laid on this one or that, and sometimes the order. There is no use in proving what your adversary has chosen to admit — or to omit. You must meet him, so far as possible, on his own ground. There is no use in keeping the order you planned beforehand, if your adversary's speech gives you a chance to make an effective change. Success in debate, indeed, depends largely on meeting opportunities.

I. Meeting the Opportunity

Rebutting the charges of the Sanhedrin (Acts xxiii. 6), "When Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee. *Of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question.* And when he had

so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the multitude was divided. For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit; but the Pharisees confess both. And there arose a great cry; and the scribes that were of the Pharisees' part arose and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man; but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God." The apostle did not abandon his plan of pleading "the hope and resurrection of the dead"; but he suddenly changed his method to seize an opportunity.

II. Challenging Assertions of Fact

All rebuttal, said a wise man, reduces itself to two questions: (1) How do you know? (2) What of it? In other words, a reply in debate, as in any other discussion, first seizes on any statement of facts that demands better evidence; and secondly seizes on any crookedness in the reasoning from those facts. In still other words, a speech may be

weak either in its premises or in its conclusions, or perhaps in both. Unwarranted assertions may be made, whether carelessly or maliciously; and from even warranted assertions unwarranted arguments may be drawn. The watchful debater has his eyes wide open for either; for thus only can he be sure of the two things (page 24) of which a speech is made.

The charges and defence just quoted in part did not rest there. The case was referred by the chief Roman captain, Claudius Lysias, to the Roman provincial governor, Felix (Acts xxiv).

TRIAL OF ST. PAUL BEFORE FELIX

And after five days Ananias the high priest descended with the elders, and with a certain orator named Tertullus, who informed the governor against Paul. And when he was called forth, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying, Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence, we accept it always, and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness. Notwithstanding, that I be not further tedious unto thee, I pray thee that thou wouldest hear us of thy clemency a few words. For we have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. (He) also hath gone about to profane the temple. (Him) we took, and would have judged according to our law. But the chief captain Lysias came upon us, and with great violence took him away out of our hands, commanding his accusers to come unto thee. By examining of (them) thyself mayest take knowledge of all these things whereof we accuse him.

And the Jews also assented, saying that 9
these things were so. Then Paul, after 10
that the governor had beckoned unto him
to speak, answered: —

Forasmuch as I know that thou hast
been of many years a judge unto this na-
tion, I do the more cheerfully answer for
myself; because that thou mayest under- 11
stand that there are yet but twelve days
since I went up to Jerusalem for to wor-
ship. And they neither found me in the 12
temple disputing with any man, neither
raising up the people, neither in the syna-
gogues, nor in the city. Neither can they 13
prove the things whereof they now accuse
me. But this I confess unto thee, that 14
after the way which they call heresy so
worship I the God of my fathers, believing
all things which are written in the law and
in the prophets; and have hope toward 15
God, which they themselves also allow,
that there shall be a resurrection of the
dead, both of the just and unjust. And 16
herein do I exercise myself, to have always
a conscience void of offence toward God
and toward men. Now after many years 17
I came to bring alms to my nation, and
offerings. Whereupon certain Jews from 18

Asia found me purified in the temple,
neither with multitude nor with tumult.
(These) ought to have been here before 19
thee, and object, if they had ought against
me. Or else let these same here say if they 20
have found any evil doing in me while I
stood before the council, except it be for 21
this one voice that I cried standing among
them, Touching the resurrection of the
dead I am called in question by you this
day.

Evidently the apostle's rebuttal was directed almost entirely against his adversaries' assertions of fact. And in great part he contented himself with simply challenging his accusers (verse 13) to give evidence of their assertions. For these assertions were large and general: "We have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world" (verse 5). To meet assertions so absurdly sweeping, it was enough merely to demand evidence of particular acts such as they alleged. When an adversary launches out into sweeping general charges, the best method

of reply is to pin him down to particulars. If he cannot give these, his general assertions become ridiculous. If, giving particulars, he cannot support them by sufficient evidence, he is still plainly at fault.

Something like a particular charge, indeed, they did make, namely, that he had "gone about to profane the temple" (verse 6). This, therefore, the apostle answers particularly. First he seizes upon the time; "there are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship" (*i.e.* went up to the temple). Every act being necessarily done at a certain place and time and in certain other circumstances, it is necessary, in order to prove exactly what was done, to sift all these circumstances carefully. And, of them all, the time, perhaps, is oftenest important. A robbery, for instance, must have been committed, as we discover by sifting the testimony, between ten o'clock and midnight. Then if it can be proved that the man accused of the robbery was at home, before the eyes of trustworthy witnesses, during those

two hours, he is at once cleared. My alleged profanation of the temple, says the apostle, must have been committed within the last twelve days. Now it was at once evident, without any dwelling upon it, that most of those twelve days had been spent by the apostle in the hands of Roman guards (see chapters xxii. 30; xxiii. 11, 32; xxiv. 1). There remained perhaps four days to account for; and since his accusers had not specified any particular acts, but vaguely charged sedition and profanation in general, he contents himself with adding: "They neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogues, nor in the city. Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me" (verses 12 and 13). The rebuttal should have been enough; but the apostle adds his own statement (verses 17–21) of the particulars of what actually happened; and challenges his accusers to disprove any one of these particulars. He not only exposes a misstatement of facts, but he enforces a true statement.

III. Exposing Weak Arguments

"But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers" (verse 14). Certain facts, then, the apostle admitted; but he did not admit what his accusers were trying to make these facts mean. They call this heresy. They have no right to call it so. Their reasoning from these admitted facts is unwarranted. For I believe "all things which are written in the law and in the prophets" as well as they. The final issue between us is whether my reasoning from the law and the prophets is orthodox, or theirs. So they are really begging the question. And as for my particular insistence on the resurrection, "they. themselves allow that there shall be a resurrection." How, then, can they argue heresy?

The open charges of sedition and profanation were refuted by challenging the assertions of fact; the implied charge of heresy was refuted by exposing the weakness of the argument. In St. Peter's defence before the

council (page 24), all the facts alleged by his accusers he admitted. His defence consisted in showing that there were other facts, unmentioned by them, which were so vital as to force a conclusion quite different from theirs. When he had insisted on these, their reasoning at once appeared so hasty that he needed only to add, "What was I, that I could withstand God?" The facts that we know and the inferences that we immediately draw from them are so closely bound together in our thinking that it is often hard to consider them separately. Nor is it always necessary to separate them absolutely. What is necessary for effective reply is to take care of them both.

IV. Keeping One's Temper

There is another aspect, not so obvious, in which St. Paul was superior. That is his manner, his tone. His opponents were angry. They called him names — "pestilent fellow," "ringleader." They even so far forgot themselves as to show irritation before

a Roman judge at a Roman officer (verse 7). The apostle had much greater provocation. He knew that the prosecution was malicious; he had reason to suspect that the trial would be unfair. In fact, it transpired later that the judge was waiting, not to be convinced, but to be bribed (verse 26). Yet the apostle kept his calmness and his courtesy. Evidently fearless, utterly earnest, he yet refrained from personalities and from charging the unworthy motives that in this case, as in many others, might have moved him out of himself. This is a great advantage. Indeed, it is almost a necessity to effective debate. When debate lapses into angry retort, it usually ceases to be worth hearing. A man cannot be master of the occasion unless he is master of himself; and he can in no way better win sympathy for his cause than by silently showing that he thinks more of the cause than of himself.

But further this superiority is moral. It is part of an influence that counts in every speech, the feeling of the speaker's personal-

ity. Sometimes, even more than from the speech, the effect seems to come from the speaker; and always, however unconsciously, an audience feels the man behind the argument. That is why for effective speaking nothing can take the place of sincerity devoted to the object.

V. Strengthening One's Own Side

Your own case is stronger in proportion as your opponent's is weaker; but that is not enough for an audience. At the end of your reply they ought to feel, not merely that you have answered him, but that you have positively strengthened your own case. Good debate is more than answering this point of your opponent, and that, and that. To use the language of boxing, it is not mere parrying; it is countering. It is using your opponent's speech as an opportunity to impress your own. This the apostle does, first, by showing that both the apparent object of their attack, his public conduct in Jerusalem, and the real object of their attack,

his preaching of the resurrection, stand firm in spite of all they have been able to bring forward. He urges, not only that he is not guilty, but that he is doing good; not only that his doctrine of the resurrection is not heresy, but that it is a most important point of orthodoxy. So he closes his speech, as he closes his speech before Agrippa (Acts xxvi. 27), with a positive point, and that point the very purpose of all his speaking. He not only answered his accusers; he also preached his own sermon.

CHAPTER II

HOW TO PREPARE AN ESSAY

(Based on the *Epistles to the Romans* and *Corinthians* and on the *Apocryphal Book of Wisdom*)

A. HOW FAR AN ESSAY IS LIKE A SPEECH

A SPEECH is made to be heard; an essay to be read. How far are these different conditions to be met by different means, and how far by the same means?

At the start it is plain that both speech and essay must be made up of the same things, must have much the same contents (see page 24). For if an essay is written to prove or persuade, it must consist, like a speech, of facts and arguments. But an essay, oftener than a speech, aims not so much to persuade as to explain; or, to put it the other way, when the aim is merely to

explain, we had often rather see the thing than hear it. We like to have it in black and white. So an essay is the natural form for explanation. As such it gives admirable practice, not only for writing, but also for speaking. To put down facts precisely and orderly, so that they cannot be misunderstood, requires no little skill, and never ceases to train the mind. It is worth while as a means to a further end, — that is, for persuasion; it is also worth while as an end in itself.

Even when an essay aims merely to explain, it is rarely confined to mere statement of facts; it is written more often to show their bearing, their meaning. It deals with the outside only in order to reveal the inside. A man writes an essay because he has discerned in facts that perhaps are known to all something that is not known to all, something that he thinks all ought to understand as the meaning of those facts, — in short, some underlying principle. This aim, to explain the meaning underneath, is an ear-mark, not

only of formal essays, but of informal essays, too. Whether the author chooses to be heavy or light, he is pretty sure to have that aim as his reason for writing. An essay, then, may be written either to persuade or merely to explain; but in either case it is usually written to show the inside.

AN ESSAY ON IDOLATRY

(*The Wisdom of Solomon*, chapters xiii and xiv)

xiii

Surely vain are all men by nature who 1
are ignorant of God, and could not out of
the good things that are seen know him
that is; neither by considering the works
did they acknowledge the workmaster,
but deemed either fire or wind, or the
swift air, or the circle of the stars, or the 2
violent water, or the lights of heaven, to
be the gods which govern the world. With 3
whose beauty if they being delighted took
them to be gods, let them know how
much better the Lord of them is; for the
first author of beauty hath created them.
But if they were astonished at their power 4
and virtue, let them understand by them
how much mightier he is that made them.

For by the greatness and beauty of the creatures proportionably the maker of them is seen. But yet for this they are the less to be blamed; for they peradventure err, seeking God, and desirous to find him. For, being conversant in his works, they search him diligently, and believe their sight; because the things are beautiful that are seen. Howbeit, neither are they to be pardoned. For if they were able to know so much that they could aim at the world, how did they not sooner find out the Lord thereof?

But miserable are they, and in dead things is their hope, who called them gods which are the works of men's hands, gold and silver, to shew art in, and resemblances of beasts, or a stone good for nothing, the work of an ancient hand. Now a carpenter that felleth timber, after he hath sawn down a tree meet for the purpose, and taken off all the bark skilfully round about, hath wrought it handsomely, and made a vessel thereof fit for the service of man's life; and, after spending the refuse of his work to dress his meat, hath filled himself. And taking the very refuse among those which served to no use, being

a crooked piece of wood, and full of knots, (he) hath carved it diligently, when he had nothing else to do, and formed it by the skill of his understanding, and fashioned it to the image of a man; or made it like some vile beast, laying it over with vermilion, and with paint colouring it red, and covering every spot therein. And when he hath made a convenient room for it, (he) set it in a wall, and made it fast with iron. For he provided for it that it might not fall, knowing that it was unable to help itself; for it is an image, and hath need of help. Then maketh he prayer for his goods, for his wife and children, and is not ashamed to speak to that which hath no life. For health he calleth upon that which is weak, for life prayeth to that which is dead, for aid humbly beseecheth that which hath least means to help, (and) for a good journey (he) asketh of that which cannot set a foot forward, and for gaining and getting, and for good success of his hands, asketh ability to do of him that is most unable to do anything.

Again, one preparing himself to sail, and about to pass through the raging

waves, calleth upon a piece of wood more rotten than the vessel that carrieth him. For verily desire of gain devised that, and 2
the workman built it by his skill. But 3
thy providence, O Father, governeth it; for thou hast made a way in the sea, and a safe path in the waves, shewing that thou 4
canst save from all danger, yea, though a man went to sea without art. Nevertheless thou wouldest not that the works of 5
thy wisdom should be idle; and therefore do men commit their lives to a small piece of wood, and, passing the rough sea in a weak vessel, are saved. For in the 6
old time also, when the proud giants perished, the hope of the world governed by thy hand escaped in a weak vessel, and left to all ages a seed of generation. For 7
blessed is the wood whereby righteousness cometh. But that which is made with 8
hands is cursed, as well it as he that made it; he because he made it, and it because, being corruptible, it was called god. For 9
the ungodly and his ungodliness are both alike hateful unto God. For that which 10
is made shall be punished together with him that made it. Therefore even upon 11
the idols of the Gentiles shall there be a

visitation; because in the creature of God they are become an abomination, and stumbling blocks to the souls of men, and a snare to the feet of the unwise. For the 12
devising of idols was the beginning of spiritual fornication, and the invention of them the corruption of life. For neither 13
were they from the beginning, neither shall they be for ever. For by the vain glory 14
of men they entered into the world, and therefore shall they come shortly to an end.

For a father afflicted with untimely 15
mourning, when he hath made an image of his child soon taken away, now honoured him as a god, which was then a dead man, and delivered to those that were under him ceremonies and sacrifices. Thus in pro- 16
cess of time an ungodly custom grown strong was kept as a law, and graven images were worshipped by the commandments of kings. Whom men could not honour 17
in presence, because they dwelt far off, they took the counterfeit of his visage from far, and made an express image of a king whom they honoured, to the end that by this their forwardness they might flatter him that was absent as if he were present.

Also the singular diligence of the artificer did help to set forward the ignorant to more superstition. For he, peradventure willing to please one in authority, forced all his skill to make the resemblance of the best fashion. And so the multitude, allured by the grace of the work, took him now for a god which a little before was but honoured as a man. And this was an occasion to deceive the world; for men, serving either calamity or tyranny, did ascribe unto stones and stocks the incommunicable name.

Moreover, this was not enough for them, that they erred in the knowledge of God; but, whereas they lived in the great war of ignorance, those so great plagues called they peace. For whilst they slew their children in sacrifices, or used secret ceremonies, or made revellings of strange rites, they kept neither lives nor marriages any longer undefiled; but either one slew another traitorously, or grieved him by adultery. So that there reigned in all men without exception blood, manslaughter, theft, and dissimulation, corruption, unfaithfulness, tumults, perjury, disquieting of good men, forgetfulness of good turns,

defiling of souls, changing of kind, disorder in marriages, adultery, and shameless uncleanness. For the worshipping of idols 27
not to be named is the beginning, the cause, and the end, of all evil. For either they 28
are mad when they be merry, or prophesy lies, or live unjustly, or else lightly forswear themselves. For insomuch as their 29
trust is in idols, which have no life, though they swear falsely, yet they look not to be hurt.

Howbeit for both causes shall they be 30
justly punished; both because they thought not well of God, giving heed unto idols, and also unjustly swore in deceit, despising holiness. For it is not the power of them 31
by whom they swear, but it is the just vengeance of sinners, that punisheth always the offence of the ungodly.

B. HOW THE PRINCIPLES OF A SPEECH APPLY TO AN ESSAY

I. Fixing One Point

The object or purpose of every speech is single (see page 8) in the strict sense of going into a single sentence. The object of

an essay may be single too; but it is not often single so very strictly. It cannot so often be summed up in a single sentence. The difference comes from this, that the object of a speech is usually to have something done; the object of an essay is usually to have something understood. The latter object is not so compellingly single. The Mars' Hill speech deals with some of the same matters as this essay on idolatry. The former turns them all toward one point of action for one audience; the latter is satisfied with showing certain main, underlying principles to anybody and everybody that cares to read, leaving them to act as they choose. God has revealed himself, says St. Paul. You Athenians must obey him. God has revealed himself, says the essayist. What fools men are to worship the creature instead of the Creator! An essay may be less single than a speech because it may not be addressed to the wills of any single set of men.

But this does not mean that an essay dare wander. An essay is not bound to one sen-

tence; but it is bound to one topic. This essay is all about idolatry. More than that, it is all about one aspect of idolatry. Idolatry is a topic broad enough to let a man write within its limits many things related to the general topic, indeed, but not related to one another. An essay written with that loose freedom would be disjointed and confusing. It would fall to pieces. It could not be remembered as a whole. This essay is not only all about *idolatry*, but all about *the folly of idolatry*. That is a topic limited enough to be treated in one brief essay. Fixing one point for an essay, then, means limiting the thought to what can be viewed all together by the reader as a whole. The topic thus chosen may be broad enough to include within itself, as in this essay, several other topics as parts; but it must not be broad enough to include anything that cannot be seen at once as part of the single whole.

Here is the difference between a single essay such as this and a chapter of separate

reflections such as make up most of the Book of Proverbs. The two are alike in some things. Both are reflective; both seek underlying principles. But this essay is meant to be remembered as a whole; most of the chapters of Proverbs are meant to be remembered as parts. "Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul. Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he" (Proverbs xxix. 17–18). So it goes. It has no one point; it has a hundred; and these are set down to be remembered, not together, but separately. It is not single; it is manifold. It is not a composition; it is a collection. But turn to the latter part of the first chapter (Proverbs i. 20–33), or to the second chapter, or the eighth, and you find the same author composing his thoughts toward one end, — that is, turning from separate proverbs to the single essay.

II. Taking Hold

How to begin? In preparing a speech the question is answered partly by knowing the audience. What to begin with is largely determined by whom to begin for (page 10). The essay-writer, on the other hand, has no audience. He addresses anybody that will read. So he is guided in his beginning only by the attitude toward his subject of the average man, and by the way he intends to go on. As in a speech, the beginning is gauged to the ending; but more than in a speech, because there is little else to gauge by. In writing an essay, taking hold means simply beginning with the right part of the subject; and what the right part is depends mainly on the plan of the whole. Practically, then, the order of these two sections is reversed. You hardly know how to take hold until you know how you are going on.

Still, what will catch the ear will often catch the eye. Where it is possible without leaving the line of thought, it is worth while

to begin strikingly. "Wisdom crieth without" (Proverbs i. 20); "Thy heart hath gone too far in this world, and thinkest thou to understand the way of the most High?" (2 Esdras iv. 2) — these are striking beginnings. The Book of Ecclesiastes opens with the famous "Vanity of vanity; all is vanity"; and one of its later essays (Ecclesiastes xi. 1) with the paradox, "Cast thy bread upon the waters."

Those first words are indeed striking; but they turn out to be still more evidently something else — they are either hints or open announcements of the theme. "All is vanity" — that is the subject of Ecclesiastes. "Surely vain are all men by nature who are ignorant of God" — a great part of this essay on idolatry is packed away in the opening words. And that is the best use to which the opening words can be put. Let them mark the subject. That is only fair to the reader. The title, if there be a title, may give a hint. Let the opening sentence make this clearer. If the opening marks the sub-

ject, sounds the theme, it is so far a good opening; if it marks the subject strikingly, it is so much the better.

To begin with a striking announcement of the theme is to begin at once without introduction. Most of the essays in the Bible are without introduction, because they are short. An extended work, like the Book of the Acts, may well have one; but a short essay — and there should be more short essays than long — may well dispense with an approach. At most a few words will be worth while. "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart and in the sight of thine eyes" (Ecclesiastes xi. 9), begins the wise man, as if he would preach license. The next words show that those were but for contrast: "but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment. Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart. . . . Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days

come not." There is the theme. The opening words, then, whether theme or introduction, should be striking; and most often they should at once sound the theme.

III. Going On

In the matter of going on an essay is essentially like a speech. Both need a plan to guide the preparation (page 15); both seek by this plan to lead along a line to the point of the whole; for both have as a large part of the task to make people follow. "I don't quite follow you" — when that is said by a hearer or mentally ejaculated by a reader, the speech or the essay is at fault. And the means of making people follow are the same for both speech and essay.

(*a*) OUTLINE OR PLAN

(Compare pages 16, 69, and 80)

Outline of the Essay on Idolatry

xiii. 1–9

1. It is vain in principle to worship the manifestation instead of the Manifester.

10–19	2. And in practice it leads to absurdity.
xiv. 1–14	3. God curses the perversion of skill toward glorifying the mere means instead of the real Power.
15–17	4. The evil arose from perverted affection,
18–21	5. and from the greed of skilled workmen.
22–29	6. It resulted in turning religion to abominable rites, and life to abominable practices.
30–31	7. For both these results punishment is inevitable.

Put into a nutshell, this is: —

The Folly of Idolatry

xiii. 1–9	A. In principle.
10–19	B. In practice.
xiv. 1–14	C. As a perversion of good gifts.

15–21 D. As arising from two main causes.
22–29 E. As having two main results.
30–31 F. As leading to inevitable retribution.

Compare this treatment with that of Isaiah, xliv. 9–20, and that of Romans i. 18–32.

(*b*) PARAGRAPHS

But some difference arises from the difference between hearing and reading. In a speech the going on must be heard; in an essay it must be seen. In a speech this may be done in two ways: first, the speaker may announce at the beginning his whole plan; second, he must wind up each stage very carefully, and pause before he begins the next. The first thing he may or may not do; and indeed, unless his speech is to be long or complicated, he often dispenses with this formality. But the second thing he must do. His audience will lose the way unless they know at once that

he has just finished one point and is now beginning another. In a word, the speaker must mark the beginnings and endings of his points or stages. Now an essay-writer is even less likely to post up his whole plan at the start; for a formal opening promises a cold and dry going on. Yet an essay-writer, too, must mark off his points clearly, mark their beginnings and their endings unmistakably. Only he must mark them for the eye. So has arisen our modern system of paragraphs. Going on in an essay is going on by paragraphs.

(1) *The Outside of a Paragraph: Spacing for the Eye*

A paragraph, to look at, is a part of an essay spaced off. It is so much of an essay as goes between two marginal spacings. Nowadays we always mark a paragraph, in writing and in print, as this one of mine is marked, by beginning it to the right of the margin, — that is, by leaving a blank space to

catch the eye. The convenience of this simple device is very great. It lets the reader run over the whole progress of the essay, either in review or in advance, by glancing at the beginnings and endings of the stages of that progress. It leaves him in no doubt as to which details the writer meant to consider separately and which details he meant to consider in combination as making for his purpose a single point.

The convenience of paragraph spaces is even more obvious by its absence than by its presence. Old books, printed before paragraph spacing became customary, are much harder to follow. The paragraphs may be there; but the reader has to find them. Stages of thought there are; but the reader has to separate them for himself. And when he comes to review, as in this case he is usually compelled to do, he has to search all over again. In fact, if you wish really to determine the line of thought in such an old book, the best way is to mark the paragraphs with a pencil as you go along, and then, when

you have read the whole, to go back over these marks in order to make sure that you have them right. This is tedious, but usually not more tedious than to grope. And no other book has suffered more from the lack of the modern convenience than the English Bible. The Authorised Version, the Bible that we all know, is printed, for the most part, not in paragraphs, but in chapters and so-called verses, with occasional section marks (¶). The chapters are usually larger than paragraphs, contain, that is, more than one stage of thought. The section marks sometimes mark paragraphs, but by no means always; and in some books, such as the Epistle to the Romans, where paragraph marking would be of the greatest assistance, there are no section marks at all. The verses are always smaller than paragraphs, contain, that is, only a small part of a stage. In the Psalms and some of the Prophets the verses correspond to those of the Hebrew poetry; what they correspond to in some other books is not

always clear. Doubtless the main intention of the translators was to supply a means of ready reference to particular passages. Whatever its idea, the printer's spacing of the English Bible, instead of helping the reader by catching his eye at the right places, hinders and confuses him by interrupting him at every sentence or two. Therefore it is a good service to reprint the Bible in paragraphs.

(2) *The Inside of a Paragraph: Marking Stages of Thought.*

But of course this paragraph spacing is a help only when it marks real paragraphs. An essay spaced every few sentences is just as confusing as an essay not spaced at all. In other words, this outside matter of spacing for the eye must correspond to the inside matter of arranging stages of thought for the mind. Outside, a paragraph is a group of sentences spaced off from another group of sentences; inside, a paragraph is one definite stage in the course of the thought.

It is one of the units that go to make up the whole. It exists in the writer's plan before it is written out in sentences. He knows it as one distinct stage in his thought before he knows just how he is going to say it. Like a man drawing, a man writing blocks out his paragraphs before he fills them in. He sketches his paragraphs first. And though he may make many changes in sentences as he revises, turning them this way and that to make them fit in better, he is much less likely to change his paragraph outline; for that would be really to change his thought. A paragraph, then, is set off for the eye of the reader as a distinct part, because it is in fact a distinct part in the mind of the writer.

Making paragraphs in an essay, then, is not at bottom different from planning successive stages in a speech; but the fact that it is done partly for the eye, that it is set down deliberately in black and white, gives it a special value in practice. It forces the composer to more exact care. Trying to

look at his writing as a reader will look at it, he puts his pencil down on places that his eye finds lacking, and makes them clearer to his reader's eye. And, as this revision leads to clearer habit, he gains in all his work.

(3) *The Paragraph as a Single Part*

In such revision of paragraphs three guiding principles may be learned from the paragraphs of the Bible; for these paragraphs, though they are often obscured by defective printing, are there underneath; and sometimes, happily, they are even marked for the eye. For instance, in developing his instruction to the Corinthians concerning spiritual gifts, St. Paul devotes one distinct stage to love, or "charity"; and this paragraph is printed (1 Corinthians xiii) as one chapter.

Though I speak with the tongues of 1
men and of angels, and have not charity, I
am become as sounding brass, or a tink-
ling cymbal. And though I have the gift 2
of prophecy, and understand all mysteries,

and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And 3
though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. Charity suffereth long, 4
and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not 5
her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but 6
rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, 7
believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never fail- 8
eth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in 9
part, and we prophesy in part; but when 10
that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I 11
understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through 12
a glass, darkly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know

even as also I am known. And now 13
abideth faith, hope, charity, these three;
but the greatest of these is charity.

This is felt as one distinct point. Why? Not because the apostle has nothing more to say on the subject, for his previous chapter deals with it, and also his following; but because he has made this stand out separately. It is at once a part and a whole. It leads from what comes before to what comes after. So it is a part. But it makes sense by itself; it is complete in itself. So it is a whole. A paragraph is a part, but it is a complete part. It is a little essay making part of a larger essay. It is not a mere broken piece; it is a squared and trimmed stone.

How is it made so distinct? How is it made to leave so clear an impression that we grasp it separately and surely before going on to the next? By being held strictly to one sentence. The idea of it all is not vaguely *charity*, but very definitely *Charity is the greatest spiritual gift*. Every clear and

strong paragraph, being held to one message, can thus be summed up in one sentence. And conversely, no paragraph will stand out clearly, for itself and as part of the larger whole, unless it has for its subject, not vaguely a word or a phrase, but strictly a sentence. The way to test at once the distinctness of a paragraph and its value as carrying on the whole progress of the essay is to see whether it can be summed up in one sentence. To sum up an essay by expressing the gist of each paragraph in a sentence (page 69) is to see at once what the whole is worth as a line of thought, and what each part is worth for itself and for the whole. What is demanded of a whole speech (page 8) is demanded of each paragraph in an essay,— that it be held to a single sentence.

(4) *The Paragraph as a Finished and Adjusted Part*

A second principle may be seen working in this paragraph. The last words sound the theme, "the greatest of these is charity."

Those words catch the eye because they come last. Just as a speaker winds up one point clearly and then pauses before beginning the next, so the writer. The speaker's pause corresponds to the paragraph space, which is here the chapter space. Whatever comes just before that pause or that space stands out. The value of this for clearness and force is happily shown in the Epistle to the Romans, where the end of a chapter is usually the end of a paragraph. Other paragraphs there are within the chapters. It it capital practice at this point to find and mark them, to see how much is gained by making *every* stage stand out. But these stages stand out already. They so stand out that their last words are remembered among the most familiar passages of the Bible: "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (end of chapter vi). "For I am persuaded that neither death nor life . . . shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord"

(end of chapter viii). "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (end of chapter xii).

How this stress on the point of each paragraph at the end clears the way, prepares the mind for the next paragraph, may also be seen in the same epistle. The fourth chapter ends: "And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone . . . but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offences and was raised again for our *justification*." That last word sums up the point. Thereupon the next paragraph begins easily, "Therefore, *being justified by faith*, we have peace," etc. The fifth chapter ends, "That as *sin* hath reigned unto death, even so might *grace* reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." So the sixth chapter can take up the next point easily: "What shall we say, then? Shall we con-

tinue in *sin*, that *grace* may abound? God forbid." Again the seventh chapter ends, "So then with the *mind* I myself serve the law of God, but with the *flesh* the law of sin." And the eighth chapter begins, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk, not after the *flesh*, but after the *spirit*." In a word, when the reader knows just where he is at the end of one stage, he is so much the readier to take up the next.

These last examples show that not only the end stands out, but also the beginning. They show also that the beginning is the place for linking — for linking the point just finished with the point just begun. They show finally how this linking is done. The opening of a paragraph, while it usually states the paragraph subject, repeats some words from the winding up of the previous paragraph. This repetition for clearness is indicated in the instances above by italics. It is like a guide-post, showing the reader how far he has already come, and at the

same time what is the next point in his journey. The end of a paragraph, then, is the place to mark the close of one stage; the beginning is the place to mark the connection between that stage and the next.

(5) *The Paragraph as a Connected Part*

Finally this rule of connection must be carried out, not only at the beginning of a paragraph, but all through; not only without, to mark the progress of the whole essay, but also within, to mark the progress in the paragraph itself. This is the third principle to be learned from the paragraphs of the Bible. Going on means progressing from paragraph to paragraph through a whole essay; it also means progressing from sentence to sentence through a whole paragraph. For the end of a paragraph cannot easily be stressed by a strong summary unless the preceding sentences have steadily led up. How is that idea, *Charity is the greatest spiritual gift*, carried through to its striking close? First the apostle heaps up assertions of the

fundamental necessity of charity. Without it even the greatest effort is vain, — eloquence, knowledge, even faith, even the extreme of self-sacrifice. These assertions are arranged in a climax, growing stronger and stronger. Then he proceeds to support these very strong assertions by showing how charity is expressed: in patience, gentleness, freedom from envy, in humility, etc. These are arranged in an order of increasing significance until the writer leads us to see how the one great gift swallows up all other gifts, expressing itself spontaneously in them because it is their proper motive power. So he has prepared us to see that charity is the great permanency. We are ready for the comparison with the other gifts as temporary. They by their nature are temporary; charity by its nature is eternal. Why? Here we are led to the culmination. Because charity is the great progressive impulse, working from childish beginnings through our earthly growth into the full life beyond. (1) Charity is a prerequisite to the higher life. (2) For

it is the motive power of all higher life. (3) Among all the expressions of this higher life it alone is permanent. (4) For it is the progressive divine impulse through higher and higher life to the highest. That is the order; and the order is a steady progress. Each point is connected with the preceding; for each preceding point is a preparation for the following.

How is this connection marked? Obviously by connectives, by putting in the right conjunctions. The first three verses, being a heaping up, an adding of one instance to another, are connected merely by *and*. The relation of the ninth verse to the eighth, and of the twelfth to the eleventh, is quite different. One is the reason or proof of the other. It is marked by *for*. There is no need of many words concerning the importance of the right conjunctions in helping the reader see the relations of ideas. But there is need of much care and revision; for most writers, whether through haste or laziness, will sometimes put in *and* or *but* when they intend a

connection quite different. In such cases the reader is left to guess, or is even positively confused. The English language has conjunctions enough to supply the right one for any shade of connection. Therefore every writer is bound to make reading fairly easy by this means. See how it is used in the essay on idolatry (page 56), and compare the looser effect of the many *and's* in the Antioch speech (page 27).

But this is not the only means. Repetition, as it serves to connect paragraphs, will also serve to connect sentences. Through this whole paragraph, like the theme in a piece of music, runs the word *charity*. To the ear or the eye, it is a steady guide. For what serves to make a given sentence stand out, as these do, emphatically, will also serve to bind sentence to sentence in one solid paragraph (see page 82).

IV. Bringing Home

All this is important; but again it is not all. Like the speaker, the writer must fix

one point; he must take hold skilfully; he must carry on progressively. Besides, since he appeals to the mind through the eye, he must carefully mark his paragraphs, and as carefully round them. Having done all this, he has made his essay clear. But perhaps he has not made it interesting. True, an essay cannot be brought home so fully as a speech. There is no equivalent for the living man speaking to hearers actually present. And again, an essay is not made so often as a speech to bring home in the sense of applying immediately to conduct (page 23). If it be written to have something done, then of course it will naturally bring home by application; but it is less often written so (page 54). Still, for all that, an essay should not leave its readers cold. For all that, if it is but an orderly set of propositions, it may fail as a speech fails. It may fail in appeal. Its points may even fail to be understood if they are not felt.

How does the writer on idolatry (page 56) try to make his readers feel? In precisely

that other way of bringing home which makes speeches interesting (page 20); that is, by suggesting images to the imagination. He makes his instances seem actually present to his readers by putting them in concrete, specific words. Suppose he had written all in the style of verses 3–9: "With whose beauty if they being delighted took them to be gods, let them know how much better the Lord of them is; for the first author of beauty hath created them. But if they were astonished at their power and virtue, let them understand by them how much mightier he is that made them. For by the greatness and beauty of the creatures proportionably the maker of them is seen," etc. *Beauty*, *power*, *virtue*, *greatness*, — those words are precise enough; but they are remote, abstract. They call up no picture. So the writer does not leave the matter so. He says they "deemed either fire, or wind, or the swift air, or the circle of the stars, or the violent water, or the lights of heaven to be the gods which govern the world" (verse 2).

What a difference in the style, in the way of putting it! Every word says something that we have seen, and can see again in recollection. And how that very specific "circle of the stars" and "violent water" lets the imagination loose!

So when he turns from theory to practice (verse 10), he is not content with the general statement, "But miserable are they and in dead things is their hope, who called them gods which are the work of men's hands." This is careful and sound enough; but he does not rest there. "Now a carpenter that felleth a timber," he goes on at once, bringing the folly home to us by a detailed description, "taking the very refuse among those which served to no purpose, being a crooked piece of wood and full of knots, hath carved it." That crooked piece of wood sticks in the mind because we seem to see it. "Or made it like some vile beast, laying it over" — with bright colours? with attractive hues? No; specifically with "vermilion." The imagination is touched by the

specific words of sights and smells, colours and sounds.

The same method is used for the same subject by the prophet (Isaiah xliv. 12–17): —

The smith with the tongs both worketh 12
in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with the strength of his arms. Yea, he is hungry, and his strength faileth; he drinketh no water, and is faint. The carpenter stretcheth out 13
his rule; he marketh it out with a line; he fitteth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compass, and maketh it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man, that it may remain in the house. He heweth him down cedars, 14
and taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest. He planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish it. Then shall 15
it be for a man to burn; for he will take thereof and warm himself. Yea, he kindleth it, and baketh bread. Yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth it; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto. He burneth part thereof 16

in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied. Yea, he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha! I am warm; I have seen the fire. And 17
the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image. He falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my god.

Though an essay, then, cannot be brought home in one way that is characteristic of a speech, it still can be brought home very effectively in the other way.

C. HOW TO REVISE AN ESSAY

It is already plain that an essay gives more opportunity for revision than a speech. The final form of a speech is sometimes not even once written fully, but prepared only in outline. The difference is in detail. In plan, in all such larger matters as the choice and grouping of material, both are revised alike; but in detail, in choice of words and arrangement of sentences, the essay can be more de-

liberate. And more deliberation is expected. What we hear is impressed upon us now or never; what we read we can scrutinise at leisure. In a speech an occasional abruptness or hesitation or looseness of language may be readily passed over; in an essay we rightly assume that the writer has deliberately settled just what he wishes to say in just the form in which he wishes to say it. He has had so much more opportunity to revise that we hold him to stricter account.

This difference is most marked in the way of making sentences. A speaker, however clear the idea in his own mind, after he has uttered it in one sentence may see that it has not taken hold. So he says it again in another form, and perhaps still again, until he is sure that it has sunk in. So the verbatim printed reports of speeches often seem to repeat more and to connect less than the speeches themselves. For, as we read print, we unconsciously assume that the writer has done all this in his rough draught, and then stricken out what is superfluous to

the eye, and settled what may have rushed into his mind as separate statements in one carefully related sentence. We expect him, not to leave us a choice of three ways, each partly right and none wholly right, but to choose and compose one way as finally best. In a word, the sentences of an essay, being made more deliberately, are naturally more complex.

So practice in writing, rather than practice in speaking, gives command of sentences. By much revision, turning this way and that until the form of the sentence shows unmistakably the relations of its parts, a writer works away from loose and disjointed forms into a habit of terseness. He can see where his sentences halt or trail; and, by revising them, he can steadily gain in mastery of vigorous statement.

I. Compound Sentences and Complex Sentences

We all learned in our school grammars the difference between compound sentences and complex. A compound sentence is a

sentence composed by putting two or more parts side by side as equal in importance. It simply adds one statement to another statement, usually by *and* or *but* or some other familiar conjunction, to show that these statements are meant to be taken together as equal parts. A complex sentence, on the other hand, is a sentence composed by putting one or more parts as it were under one main part. It is made to show that these parts are not equal, that one of them is the main statement and the others are subordinate. This difference we understood and still understand theoretically; but many of us have never applied it practically. A child explaining something will make all his sentences compound. It is easiest for him to put down everything side by side. "You cross the stone bridge, and you come to a wooden bridge next, and there is a sawmill, and just beyond that a road turns to the right, and that is the shortest way." A maturer mind, giving the same directions more deliberately, expresses them thus: "The road that forks to the

right, just beyond the sawmill by the second bridge, is the shortest way." The child talks in compound sentences because he is not old enough to feel and express the relations of his statements. He makes all his statements equal, though he does not mean them to be equal. The man talks in complex sentences just in so far as he feels and expresses relations. Compound sentences are the language of childhood; the language, that is, both of children and of early prose, such as old chronicles. Complex sentences are the language of maturity; that is, both of grown men and of modern prose. Every one, therefore, who seeks to express himself precisely and concisely must know how to turn the accidental compound sentences that he dashed off in a hurry into the deliberate complex sentences that he really means. This is an important part of revision.

Of course not all compound sentences are accidental. A compound sentence is a perfectly good form when it says what you mean. "The rod and reproof give wisdom;

but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame" (Proverbs xxix. 15). Here is a compound sentence that could not be made otherwise. The very point is to put these two statements side by side for contrast. The sentence must be compound. Such cases occur by hundreds. But when the statements are not intentionally parallel, when they are made parallel simply because the writer is thinking loosely, then revision should correct the form until it tells the truth.

But yet for this they are the less to be blamed; for they peradventure err, and really seek God, and are desirous to find him. For they are conversant in his works, and search him diligently, and believe their sight; and the things that they see are beautiful (Wisdom xiii. 6 and 7. See page 57).

This conveys certain ideas, but how loosely and vaguely! Turn now to see how the form of the sentences as they were actually written makes the thoughts clearer by expressing the relations exactly:—

But yet for this they are the less to be blamed; for they peradventure err, *seeking* God and desirous to find him. For, *being* conversant in his works, they search him diligently and believe their sight, *because* the things are beautiful that are seen.

The paragraph from 1 Corinthians, printed above (page 77), may well be studied to see when sentences are properly compound and when they are properly complex. The first three sentences are complex because they must be complex. "Though I speak," "Though I have the gift," "Though I bestow all my goods," — in each case this opening statement is subordinated. To write: "I may speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not charity, and become as sounding brass," etc., would dull both the meaning and the force. But when the apostle intends a parallel, he makes the sentence parallel: "For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known." Taken as a whole, the

English Bible is looser in this single respect than the best modern prose. The reason for this difference has been hinted above. When the translation was made, the English language, though exceptionally rich in store of words, had not yet developed a consistently logical habit of sentences. In habit of sentences it was still youthful. So the translation of St. Paul's epistles, for instance, is sometimes inadequate to the nicer sentence relations of the original Greek. Still, it has examples enough of careful subordination to point the way.

Such revision serves the further purpose of breaking monotony. A series of compound sentences is tiresome, not only because it is slipshod, but also because it makes a singsong. Whether spoken or written, such a series tends to lull people to sleep. And conversely, one good way to keep people awake is variety in sentences.

II. Sentences that Make the Right Word Stand Out

If the second sentence of the paragraph on charity (page 77) be spoken or read aloud, the voice will fall with natural emphasis on "*nothing*." So the third sentence — "it profiteth me *nothing*." So the last sentence — "the greatest of these is *charity*." So, indeed, though in lesser degree, all the sentences put the most important word at the end. All practised speakers know that one great way to give particular words particular stress is to put them where the voice falls naturally, — at the end. What is true for the ear is true also, though not so conspicuously, for the eye. That last sentence of mine I deliberately turned as I wrote it, so as to put the word *eye* last. I wished to show that I meant that word to be emphasized. If I had written, *What is true for the ear is true also for the eye, though not so conspicuously*, though the words are the same, the meaning is a shade different. It seems then as if I meant to dwell on the idea of its

not being so *conspicuous*. I should thereby call attention to the wrong word. For somewhat as the end of a paragraph (page 81) catches the ear and the eye, so the end of a sentence. Every sentence has some part that is the most important for carrying on the thought. If this word stands at the end of its sentence, it stands out. By standing out it makes that sentence stronger; and it makes the whole paragraph clearer. For, just as the end of a paragraph is particularly the place for driving home the thought of that paragraph, so the end of a sentence ought to clinch that sentence; and just as an emphatic close of one paragraph helps the reader to take the next step of the next paragraph, so the emphatic close of one sentence prepares the mind best for the next sentence.

For we know *in part*, and we prophesy *in part*. But when that which is *perfect* is come, then that which is *in part* shall be *done away*. When I was a *child*, I spake as a *child*, I understood as a *child*, I thought as a

child; but when I became a man *I put away childish things.*

This case is the more obvious because it is extreme. But the same principle holds good where the emphasis is less marked. The eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans begins:—

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus (opening reference to the preceding chapter. See page 83), who walk, *not after the flesh but after the Spirit.* For the *law of the Spirit of life* in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the *law of sin and death.* For what the *law* could not do, in that it was weak through the *flesh*, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of *sinful flesh*, and for sin, *condemned sin in the flesh*; that the righteousness of the *law* might be fulfilled in us who walk, *not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* For they that are *after the flesh*, etc.

The italics mark the method of carrying on the thought steadily. Each sentence strikes its most important word at its close,

and at the same time takes up some important word of the preceding sentence at its beginning. The effect is to make the important words continually stand out. The first work in revising sentences, then, is to make their form express their thought clearly; the second work is to heighten this clearness by making their form mark the main words at the end.

CHAPTER III

HOW TO TELL A STORY

STORY-TELLING is the oldest and the most popular of all the arts. An art it is; for some people do it much better than others, and many people have improved in it by practice. The same events seem dull and tedious, or lively and interesting, according to the way in which they are told. And this familiar fact shows, not only that one way is better than another, but also that the first object of all stories is to be interesting. Other objects a story may have; for instance, to be instructive, as the stories in the Bible; or to be diverting, as many of the stories told in conversation; but these objects depend on the one main object. People will not be instructed or diverted unless they are interested. Whatever else a good story is,

it must be interesting. To learn the art or skill of story-telling, then, is first and foremost to learn how to tell events in such a way as to make people glad to hear, eager to hear more, and satisfied at the end. Why should you tell me a story at all? — why should I listen to you? — except only because you, feeling in certain events a peculiar interest, can awaken and sustain in me the same interest.

THE LOST SON

(2 Samuel xviii)

And David numbered the people that 1
were with him, and set captains of thousands and captains of hundreds over them.
And David sent forth the people, a third 2
part under the hand of Joab, and a third part under the hand of Abishai, the son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother, and a third part under the hand of Ittai the Gittite. And the king said unto the people, I will surely go forth with you myself also. But the 3
people said, Thou shalt not go forth: for if we flee away, they will not care for us; neither if half of us die, will they care for

us; but now thou art worth ten thousand of us. Therefore now it is better that thou be ready to succour us out of the city. And the king said unto them, What 4
seemeth you best I will do. And the king stood by the gate side; and all the people went out by hundreds and by thousands. And the king commanded 5
Joab and Abishai and Ittai, saying, Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom. And all the people heard when the king gave all the captains charge concerning Absalom.

So the people went out into the field against Israel; and the battle was in the wood of Ephraim. (And) the people of 7
Israel were slain (there) before the servants of David; and there was there a great slaughter that day of twenty thousand men. For the battle was there 8
scattered over the face of all the country; and the wood devoured more people that day than the sword devoured. And Ab- 9
salom met the servants of David. And Absalom rode upon a mule, and the mule went under the thick boughs of a great oak, and his head caught hold of the oak, and he was taken up between the heaven

and the earth; and the mule that was
under him went away. And a certain 10
man saw it and told Joab, and said, Behold, I saw Absalom hanged in an oak.
And Joab said unto the man that told 11
him, And, behold, thou sawest it, and
why didst thou not smite him there to the
ground? and I would have given thee ten
shekels of silver, and a girdle. And the 12
man said unto Joab, Though I should
receive a thousand shekels of silver in
mine hand, yet would I not put forth
mine hand against the king's son; for in
our hearing the king charged thee and
Abishai and Ittai, saying, Beware that
none touch the young man Absalom.
Otherwise I should have wrought false- 13
hood against mine own life; for there is
no matter hid from the king, and thou
thyself wouldest have set thyself against
me. Then said Joab, I may not tarry 14
thus with thee. And he took three darts
in his hand, and thrust them through the
heart of Absalom, while he was yet alive
in the midst of the oak. And ten young 15
men that bare Joab's armour compassed
about and smote Absalom, and slew him.
And Joab blew the trumpet, and the peo- 16

ple returned from pursuing after Israel: for Joab held back the people. And they took Absalom, and cast him into a great pit in the wood, and laid a very great heap of stones upon him. And all Israel fled every one to his tent.[1]

Then said Ahimaaz the son of Zadok, Let me now run and bear the king tidings, how that the Lord hath avenged him of his enemies. And Joab said unto him, Thou shalt not bear tidings this day; but thou shalt bear tidings another day; but this day thou shalt bear no tidings, because the king's son is dead. Then said Joab to Cushi, Go tell the king what thou hast seen. And Cushi bowed himself unto Joab, and ran. Then said Ahimaaz the son of Zadok yet again unto Joab, But howsoever, let me, I pray thee, also run after Cushi. And Joab said, Wherefore wilt thou run, my son, seeing that thou hast no tidings ready? But howsoever, said he, let me run. And he

[1] Now Absalom in his life time had taken and reared up for himself a pillar, which is in the king's dale. For he said, I have no son to keep my name in remembrance. And he called the pillar after his own name; and it is called unto this day, Absalom's place.

said unto him, Run. Then Ahimaaz ran by the way of the plain, and overran Cushi.

And David sat between the two gates. 24
And the watchman went up to the roof over the gate unto the wall, and lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold a man running alone. And the watchman cried, 25
and told the king. And the king said, If he be alone, there is tidings in his mouth. And he came apace, and drew near. And the watchman saw another 26
man running; and the watchman called unto the porter, and said, Behold, another man running alone. And the king said, He also bringeth tidings. And the watch- 27
man said, Methinketh the running of the foremost is like the running of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok. And the king said, He is a good man, and cometh with good tidings. And Ahimaaz called, and said 28
unto the king, All is well. And he fell down to the earth upon his face before the king, and said, Blessed be the Lord thy God, which hath delivered up the men that lifteth up their hand against my lord the king. And the king said, 29
Is the young man Absalom safe? And

Ahimaaz answered, When Joab sent the king's servant, and me thy servant, I saw a great tumult, but I knew not what it was. And the king said unto him, Turn 30
aside, and stand here. And he turned aside, and stood still. And, behold, Cushi 31
came; and Cushi said, Tidings, my lord the king; for the Lord hath avenged thee this day of all them that rose up against thee. And the king said unto Cushi, Is 32
the young man Absalom safe? And Cushi answered, The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise against thee to do thee hurt, be as that young man is. And the king was much moved, and went 33
up to the chamber over the gate, and wept; and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!

This story, though it is part of a long history, is complete in itself. Though it is a chapter in the long life of David, it stands out distinctly by itself. We could follow it perfectly without knowing any more than is told here. That is the first requisite

of a good story. It must be complete and entire, not a fragment, but a whole. The events of any man's experience go on and on. They have their roots far back in the graves of his grandfathers, and farther and farther back. They have their consequences in the future as well as in the present. They have neither beginning nor end. But a story-teller must first of all select a beginning and an end. He must cut out a piece of life small enough to be recounted in an hour, a half-hour, even a quarter of an hour. He must so shape this piece as to make it complete for its purpose. He must put into it all that is necessary, leave out of it all that is not necessary, for its particular interest. Otherwise he has no story at all. Otherwise he is merely one of those who claim our attention to insignificant fragments, who never have done because they never bring anything to a point — who, in short, are bores. This story of one day in David's life teaches us, first of all, to tell one story

at a time. It urges us, whenever we claim people's attention, to fix their attention on one particular point of interest, which we have settled beforehand, and which will make the story, whether it be long or short, stand out distinctly as complete in itself.

I. Fixing One Point

(*a*) FIXING ONE MAIN PERSON

And the story here shows us just how this is done. In the first place, our attention is centred on one person. The story does, indeed, tell of several persons, — David, Joab, Absalom, the soldier who first saw Absalom, Ahimaaz, Cushi, the watchman; but all the while the attention is fixed on David. We begin with him at the gate; we end with him at the gate; and all the while we feel with him. "I would not put forth mine hand against the king's son; for in our hearing the king charged thee" (verse 12) reminds us of the king even when we are away from him in the field.

The eagerness of Ahimaaz to run (verse 19) is because of his reverent care for David. And through all the rest of the story we are with David. We hope against hope with him at the beginning. We watch with him at the gate. We wait with him upon the dreaded tidings. We grieve with him at the inevitable end. We know that it had to be because he knew that it had to be. Yet our interest is kept upon the fatal field because his was kept. The whole story is told with reference to one main person. It is David's story. Whose story is it? is the first question leading toward the fixing of one point of interest. Fix the one person with whom we are to feel. Put yourself in his place, that you may put us in his place. His character and motives will then determine the whole story. The first way to have one story is to have one main person.

This is especially true of short stories, that is, of such stories as most people have occasion to tell. But it is true of all stories,

whatever their length, which leave a single impression. The Book of Ruth is single because it is dominated by the one character of Ruth. The apocryphal Book of Judith, again, is one story, because Judith is constantly put forward, because we are all through thinking and feeling with her; but the story of Abimelech (Judges ix) is several stories, because the main interest is sometimes diverted to others. The story of Joab never comes out distinctly and separately at all, because Joab, for the purposes of the Bible history, is always a secondary character. It would be an interesting exercise to make from the history in 2 Samuel and 1 Kings a story of Joab. For it would show clearly that story-telling does not always serve the purpose of history, and that the same material gives very different stories, according as this man or that is put forward as the dominant character.

(*b*) FIXING ONE MAIN EVENT

But the fixing of one main character is not enough in itself to hold a story together as one. A story must also have one main event. It must end with one main scene which is its issue, or point, or climax. Neither Gideon (Judges vi–viii), nor Samson (Judges xiv–xvi) makes a single story, though each is dominated by one character; for neither is led all through to a single issue. But Gideon's battle of the pitchers (Judges vii. 1–22) makes one story; and so does Samson's captivity. For the one ends: "The three hundred blew the trumpets, and the Lord set every man's sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host; and the host fled." And the other ends: "And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon the lords and all the people that were therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life." In each case we

are satisfied. Our interest is released. The story is finished. Anything further is another story.

Of course to have a climax necessitates having a main character first. The climax is his climax. Literature has no stronger climax than that tragic "my son, my son!" That is the issue of the story because it is the issue of the main character. The two are inseparable. Only it is always necessary to express the character finally in one vivid scene. Feeling and seeing with him all along, we are thus brought at last to one great moment where, if the story be strong, his final decision or action, his final triumph or agony, becomes ours — where we almost become the main character. In order to satisfy us so, — and we are hardly satisfied with less, — the story-teller must realise this scene with especial vividness. He must make us feel that we are there. He must see and feel that scene so distinctly in his imagination that he kindles our imaginations to see it and feel it too. For this

scene is the whole story expressed in one moment. Until the story-teller has that scene before his mind as the issue of the whole action, as the way in which things are to come out, he hardly has a story at all. The climax makes the story.

These scenes in which the story "comes out," as we say, are therefore the ones that stick in our minds. Joseph declaring himself to his brethren (Genesis xlv), Samson tearing down the pillars, Jehu shouting up to the window where Jezebel looked out, "Throw her down" (2 Kings ix) — such scenes as these are vivid even in memory. On the other hand, stories no less rich in the possibilities of interest may be dim for lack of climax. Such is Abimelech (Judges ix), though as a tale of violence it might be very striking. And the climax, as it holds the reader, holds the writer also. Those stories which fasten our attention and fix themselves in our memories are the ones in which a distinct climax has so seized the writer's imagination as to control all his tell-

ing by giving it a single direction. For the surest way to gain and hold attention is to focus it upon the issue of one main person in one main scene.

II. Taking Hold

Another means toward making a story single and complete in itself, in order to hold and increase the interest, is to begin at the right point. The point of beginning must be so chosen as to keep the attention on a small space. This is not so important, indeed, as to focus on one person and one climax scene; but the one helps the other. The repetition of the words *this day* reminds us that the whole tragedy of *The Lost Son* is compressed into one single day. So is the story of the conspiracy of Jehu (2 Kings ix). The action of the whole Book of Judith, after the historical introduction, passes in five days. There is no doubt that this compression of time helps the reader's imagination. And compression of time means the omission of as many events

as possible before the important action which is the heart of the story. To make a story interesting is to make the reader live over the events himself. He can more easily keep himself in imagination on the spot, if the spot is not often changed and the events do not cover much time. To make a story, as we have seen (page 111), is to cut out a little piece from the unending roll of life. And part of this art is to cut into the roll at the right place.

Now as to art, as to narrative effect, the stories of the Bible differ greatly. Some of them seize on our imaginations; some do not. For of course the object of the Bible is not to tell stories, but to apply history. Its story-telling is quite by the way. That fact, however, makes it none the less profitable for us to discover how best to tell a story, by comparing the different means that produced these very different effects. And one of the most marked differences is in this very compression which comes from taking hold of the story at the right

place for narrative, as distinct from historical or religious, interest.

BRINGING HOME THE BRIDE

(Genesis xxiv)

And Abraham was old, and well 1
stricken in age; and the Lord had blessed
Abraham in all things. And Abraham 2
said unto the eldest servant of his
house, that ruled over all that he had,
Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my
thigh; and I will make thee swear by 3
the Lord, the God of heaven and the
God of the earth, that thou shalt not
take a wife unto my son of the daughters
of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell;
but thou shalt go unto my country, 4
and to my kindred, and take a wife unto
my son Isaac. And the servant said 5
unto him, Peradventure the woman will
not be willing to follow me unto this land.
Must I needs bring thy son again unto
the land from whence thou camest?
And Abraham said unto him, Beware 6
that thou bring not my son thither again.
The Lord God of heaven, which took 7
me from my father's house, and from the

land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land, — he shall send his angel before thee; and thou shalt take a wife for my son from thence. And if the woman be not willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my oath; only bring not my son thither again. And the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and sware to him concerning that matter.

And the servant took ten camels of the camels of his master, and departed (for all the goods of his master were in his hand); and he arose, and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor. And he made the camels to kneel down without the city by a well of water at the time of the evening, even the time that women go out to draw water. And he said, O Lord God of my master Abraham, I pray thee send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham. Behold, I stand by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water; and let it come to pass that the damsel to

whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also;—let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master.

And it came to pass, before he had 15
done speaking, that, behold, Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder. And the damsel was very fair to 16
look upon, a virgin, neither had any man known her. And she went down to the well and filled her pitcher, and came up. And the servant ran to meet her, and 17
said, Let me, I pray thee, drink a little water of thy pitcher. And she said, 18
Drink, my lord; and she hasted, and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink. And when she had 19
done giving him drink, she said, I will draw water for thy camels also, until they have done drinking. And she 20
hasted, and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran again unto the well to

draw water, and drew for all his camels.
And the man, wondering at her, held 21
his peace to wit whether the Lord had
made his journey prosperous or not.

And it came to pass, as the camels had 22
done drinking, that the man took a golden
earring of half a shekel weight, and two
bracelets for her hands of ten shekels
weight of gold, and said, Whose daughter 23
art thou? tell me, I pray thee. Is there
room in thy father's house for us to lodge
in? And she said unto him, I am the 24
daughter of Bethuel, the son of Milcah,
which she bare unto Nahor. She said 25
moreover unto him, We have both straw
and provender enough, and room to lodge 26
in. And the man bowed down his head 27
and worshipped the Lord. And he said,
Blessed be the Lord God of my master
Abraham, who hath not left destitute my
master of his mercy and his truth. I being
in the way, the Lord led me to the house
of my master's brethren.

And the damsel ran, and told them of 28
her mother's house these things. And 29
Rebekah had a brother, and his name was
Laban; and Laban ran out unto the man,
unto the well. And it came to pass when 30

he saw the earring and bracelets upon his sister's hands, and when he heard the words of Rebekah his sister saying, Thus spake the man unto me,—that he came unto the man; and, behold, he stood by the camels at the well. And he said, Come in, thou 31
blessed of the Lord. Wherefore standest thou without? For I have prepared the house, and room for the camels. And the 32
man came into the house; and he ungirded his camels, and gave straw and provender for the camels, and water to wash his feet and the men's feet that were with him.

And there was set meat before him to 33
eat; but he said, I will not eat, until I have told mine errand. And he said, 34
Speak on. And he said, I am Abraham's servant. And the Lord hath blessed my 35
master greatly; and he is become great; and he hath given him flocks and herds, and silver and gold, and menservants and maidservants, and camels and asses. And 36
Sarah, my master's wife, bare a son to my master when she was old; and unto him hath he given all that he hath. And my 37
master made me swear, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife to my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I dwell;

but thou shalt go unto my father's house, 38
and to my kindred, and take a wife unto
my son. And I said unto my master, 39
Peradventure the woman will not follow
me. And he said unto me, The Lord, 40
before whom I walk, will send his angel
with thee, and prosper thy way; and thou
shalt take a wife for my son of my kindred,
and of my father's house. Then shalt thou 41
be clear from this my oath, when thou com-
est to my kindred; and if they give not
thee one, thou shalt be clear from my oath.
And I came this day unto the well, and 42
said, O Lord God of my master Abraham,
if now thou do prosper my way which I
go, behold, I stand by the well of water;
and it shall come to pass that when the 43
virgin cometh forth to draw water, and I say
to her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water
of thy pitcher to drink; and she say to me, 44
Both drink thou and I will also draw for
thy camels, — let the same be the woman
whom the Lord hath appointed out for
my master's son. And before I had done 45
speaking in mine heart, behold, Rebekah
came forth with her pitcher on her shoul-
der; and she went down unto the well,
and drew water; and I said unto her, Let

me drink, I pray thee. And she made haste, and let down her pitcher from her shoulder, and said, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also. So I drank, and she made the camels drink also. And I asked her, and said, Whose daughter art thou? And she said, The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son, whom Milcah bare unto him. And I put the earring upon her face, and the bracelets upon her hands. And I bowed down my head and worshipped the Lord, and blessed the Lord God of my master Abraham, which had led me in the right way to take my master's brother's daughter unto his son. And now if ye will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me: and if not, tell me; that I may turn to the right hand, or to the left.

Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, The thing proceedeth from the Lord: we cannot speak unto thee bad or good. Behold, Rebekah is before thee. Take her, and go; and let her be thy master's son's wife, as the Lord hath spoken.

And it came to pass that, when Abraham's servant heard their words, he worshipped the Lord, bowing himself to the

earth. And the servant brought forth 53
jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and
raiment, and gave them to Rebekah. He
gave also to her brother and to her mother
precious things.

And they did eat and drink, he and the 54
men that were with him, and tarried all
night. And they rose up in the morning,
and he said, Send me away unto my mas-
ter. And her brother and her mother said, 55
Let the damsel abide with us a few days,
at the least ten. After that she shall go.
And he said unto them, Hinder me not, 56
seeing the Lord hath prospered my way.
Send me away that I may go to my mas-
ter. And they said, We will call the dam- 57
sel, and inquire at her mouth. And they 58
called Rebekah, and said unto her, Wilt
thou go with this man? And she said, I
will go. And they sent away Rebekah 59
their sister, and her nurse, and Abraham's
servant, and his men. And they blessed 60
Rebekah and said unto her, Thou art our
sister; be thou the mother of thousands
of millions; and let thy seed possess the
gate of those which hate them. And 61
Rebekah arose, and her damsels, and they
rode upon the camels, and followed the

man; and the servant took Rebekah, and went his way.

And Isaac came from the way of the 62
well Lahai-roi; for he dwelt in the south
country. And Isaac went out to meditate 63
in the field at the eventide; and he lifted
up his eyes and saw, and, behold, the
camels were coming. And Rebekah 64
lifted up her eyes; and, when she saw
Isaac, she lighted off the camel. For she 65
had said unto the servant, What man is
this that walketh in the field to meet us?
And the servant had said, It is my master.
Therefore she took a vail and covered her-
self. And the servant told Isaac all things 66
that he had done. And Isaac brought her 67
into his mother Sarah's tent, and took
Rebekah, and she became his wife; and
he loved her. And Isaac was comforted
after his mother's death.

This beautiful old tale, like most old tales, lacks the intensity of *The Lost Son*. The different manner is appropriate enough to the different subject. The one is full of hope and joy, the other of foreboding and pain. But the difference of effect is not

simply in the subject; it is due also, it is due mainly, to the way of telling. *The Lost Son* issues in a climax scene so vivid as to burn into the memory; but what is the climax of this elder tale? Is it the meeting of Isaac and Rebekah? That is the natural issue of the story as a story; but in the history it does not stand out at all. We cannot see the pair meeting. There is nothing for the imagination to lay hold of except Rebekah's question, "What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us?" and her pretty Oriental action of veiling herself. Isaac says nothing, does nothing distinct. The servant tells his tale for the third time. The rest is plainest statement of fact. There is no distinct climax.

That is the root reason of the difference; but no less conspicuous is the lack of any one main character, and the childlike way of taking hold. The servant, though he is merely an instrument, has more space than any other person. The story begins with Abraham, who does not appear again. It

tells of Abraham's charge in nine verses, of the servant's journey in one verse more, of his prayer in four verses more. So far, nothing has happened. Then begins the action, after one-fifth of the space is spent. Rebekah does as the servant had prayed, and he is brought to her house. This fills another fifth. Then the servant explains, repeating at length what the reader knows already. Three-fifths of the space being now filled, the remainder moves on in fairly steady action. The importance of taking hold at the right place, as a means of holding the interest, may be proved quite simply by beginning to read at verse 15, or even at verse 28. Nothing is lost in clearness; something is lost in picturesqueness; and something is gained in compactness. In order to hold the interest by compression, then, beware of beginning too far back.

Another gain for story-telling from such a change in the way of taking hold would be that the story would then begin, as *The Lost Son* begins, with action. Interest is more

readily awakened when something happens in the story at once. A story being made up of actions, we like to have action begin forthwith. But here it is plain that how to take hold depends upon fixing one main character and issue. If we are to begin with action, whose action? Very naturally, though not of course necessarily, action by the main character. So *The Lost Son* begins with David's review of his army. Now if this older story were told as Rebekah's story, it might well begin, from her point of view, with her going down to the well and meeting the stranger with his kneeling camels. And indeed the narrator seems to see Rebekah — for we see her — more clearly than he sees any other person. But it was no part of his object to make a compact whole by making her determine the beginning and the end of his story. If he had, his tale might be not much more than half as long; and it would be much more intense. Though the pursuit of its proper object has left little room for considerations of art, even

as art we may well prefer it as it stands, for its very simplicity. The point of any experiment would be, not to correct or improve, but only to produce a different effect. For the effect, the kind of impression made by a story, depends largely on the way of taking hold.

III. Going On

The same headings have served so far in this book to divide the subject for convenience. This means that all rules of composition rest on a very few foundation principles. But the applications of these principles are more or less different for each kind. Fixing one point for a speech implies something stricter (page 63) than for an essay; and for a story the difference is not merely in degree. The one point of a speech can be summed up (page 8) in one sentence; the one point of a story is not at all of this kind. The point of *The Lost Son* cannot be summed up in a sentence. Yet one point it has, one point that we feel none the less because we cannot formulate it — one

point, indeed, that we wish, not to formulate, but to feel. A good short story, like *The Lost Son*, makes one impression on the imagination by making one dominant character issue in one striking event. A good essay or speech makes us think one way, or act in one way; a good story makes us feel in one way. It is aimed, not at our minds, not at our wills, but at our imaginations and feelings.

(*a*) GOING ON IN A SPEECH AND GOING ON IN A STORY

And this difference between the kinds of composition in the way of fixing one point brings about a corresponding difference in the way of going on. All kinds of composition must have this quality of going on, but each kind in its own proper way. A speech or an essay progresses logically from one proposition to another proposition, and so finally to the main proposition. Each of its stages bears to the one before a logical relation which can be exactly formulated and

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charted (page 69) by reducing each stage to its underlying sentence. A story, on the other hand, progresses from one action to another action, and so finally to the main action or event. Its stages cannot be summed up in sentences making a logical progress; for its stages are actions made to strike the imagination. A story, since it tries, not to prove or explain an abstract principle, but to picture a concrete event, goes on, not by carrying forward the reason, but by carrying onward the imagination. It moves by being always in action; for, when the action lags or stops, attention lags or stops too. It moves on by choosing actions so significant that each stage makes us eager for the next, until the attention is released, and the imagination satisfied, by the climax.

A story must move, and it must move on. It is lively in proportion to the abundance of action, liveliest when there is always something doing. It is intense in proportion as the actions lead the interest up and up with increasing suggestiveness towards the one

goal of them all, the climax. So, in its own different way, a compact, intense story is just as carefully planned as a speech. Every event which is not suggestive enough to key up the imagination to a higher pitch is left out; and every event that is left in, as being likely thus to keep up the interest, is put in where it will strike the imagination most significantly. Such a story moves faster and faster as it nears its climax. Just before the climax is reached, it often slows down, as it were to increase the suspense, and then spends its best force in the final stroke of realisation.

(*b*) GOING ON AS THE AVOIDANCE OF INTERRUPTION

What all this means practically may be seen by comparing the two stories before us. What makes *The Lost Son* move so much faster, and move on so much more directly? Largely, as we have seen (page 129), because of its more distinct issue or climax, and because of its more artful taking hold;

but also because of its plan. *Bringing Home the Bride* is slower because it has very little action. Very little is done before our eyes. The latter part is faster than the former mainly because from the time when the servant has finally made his proposal (verse 49) we see something doing most of the time until the end. And again, this older story, instead of moving on steadily, is several times halted. We have to wait (verse 34) while the servant explains what we already know. Explanations always make a listener or reader impatient. He would rather guess at them, or let them pass, than be kept waiting. A clever story-teller, taking his cue from our natural desire to be moving, will study to avoid explanations. In the first place, he will find that some of them, as in this story, can be omitted altogether. In the second place, he will practise bringing in such explanation as is absolutely necessary by brief hints in the onward course of the action. He will make a single sentence in the dialogue, or a speaking gesture, or a part of the

action itself, suffice to keep us informed without keeping us waiting.

For much of the art of story-telling consists in the suppressing of what is uninteresting. At the opening of *The Lost Son*, David says, "I will surely go forth with you myself also. But the people answered, Thou shalt not go forth. . . . And the king said . . . What seemeth you best I will do." That tells us, just as clearly as a long explanation, how the king's heart was torn between the dread of going in person against his rebellious son and the dread of losing his son for lack of his restraining presence. We know that he foresaw the inevitable doom, and yet struggled against it. And we know all this without any interrupting explanation. We know it by what he says and does in the onward course of the action. So, when the messenger remonstrates with Joab (verses 10–13), the story does not stop to explain that the death of Absalom was nevertheless demanded by the exigencies of the time and the hard directness of Joab. We know all

this, and, what is better, we feel it, simply from his characteristic words and action (verse 14): "I may not tarry thus with thee. And he took three darts in his hand, and thrust them through the heart of Absalom." And, finally, we are so bent on the story that we feel verse 18 as an intrusion. It is history breaking in. It reads like a marginal note; and it is all the more conspicuous because the story admits nothing else of this sort. In *Bringing Home the Bride* such an interruption would hardly be noticeable; for the teller of that story had no care to prune away the superfluous.

(*c*) GOING ON BY PROGRESSIVE PLAN

So, to make a story move on is first of all to give it free course by clearing away all interruptions. This is the negative way, the way of omission. There is also a positive way, the way of construction. To make a story move on is also to plan its events in an ascending scale of interest and significance up to a final solution. This is above all, of

course, to write for the climax. A story cannot well move on unless it moves toward the climax. The movement will not be steady and progressive unless it is directed. Each scene should tell us more of what is coming, and at the same time make us more eager to know how. For the climax of a good story at once seems inevitable and yet is not quite forecast. We have a foreboding of David's agony, but we are not satisfied until that final going up to the chamber, and that final cry; and each scene carries us a step nearer to that, as if we were drawn fatally on.

For see how each scene prepares us for the next and for the final issue — how we are led on step by step. First is the old king's review of his loyal army as they go out to crush rebellion. Rebellion must be crushed; but must the arch-rebel be crushed too? Hoping against reason, the old king pathetically charges, "Deal gently for my sake with the young man." He is after all so young; and he is after all my son. At last the name is brought out, "even with Absalom." Here

we have the whole tragic situation; but we know nothing definitely of how it will be worked up.

Then come the battle and the defeat, passed over rapidly because the story is of individuals. "The wood devoured more people that day than the sword devoured." What then? We come at once to the main actors. Absalom in headlong flight is caught by the hair. Joab, with brutal frankness, cries, "And behold thou sawest him? And why didst thou not smite him?" We begin to see how events will slip from David's control because his chieftains are too headstrong and too uncompromising for him. The scene is more exciting, more intense, than the preceding. At the same time it is a thoroughly natural sequel. Joab smites. After that stroke ten others follow. Joab sounds the recall. He is not merely bloody. He has struck the chief. The rest are scattered. It is all over.

No. What of the king now? He is

waiting, still miserably hoping. Up springs Ahimaaz, begging for the privilege of breaking the news. But Joab thinks the friend's way may not be the kindest, or perhaps he fears that version of his stroke. His words sound hesitant. He sends Cushi. But Ahimaaz still begs; and Joab, still hesitating, lets him go.

How will the king take it? This is the last scene. We see it with his eyes. We are taken back to the gate to watch the runners coming. There is increasing intensity of suspense here. First the watchman sights a moving speck. "If he be alone," says the king, "there is tidings." "Behold another man." "He also," says the breathless king, "bringeth tidings." "The running of the foremost is like the running of Ahimaaz." The king catches at a last straw. "He is a good man, and cometh with good tidings. At last the king is face to face with the news. We lean forward with him as Ahimaaz cries victory. We hear his low question, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" There is a

dreadful pause while Ahimaaz equivocates for love. The king knows. Does he not hear the ominous words "Joab" — "tumult"? But he nerves himself. "Turn aside, and stand here." He repeats his question to Cushi. The answer, still indirect, is but too plain. The bolt has fallen. Love and loyalty cannot parry it. "And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept; and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" Much of the tremendous force of this memorable climax is the force of momentum, the force of the movement that prepares us by increasing realisation, scene carrying us on to scene, and all to the last.

(*d*) GOING ON IN A STORY AND GOING ON IN A DRAMA

An intense short story, then, goes on by going straight up to a climax at the end. This is its way. It is not, as we have seen,

the only way to tell a story. It is not the way to tell a simple, leisurely tale or a chronicle history. Nor is it the way, usually, to tell a story on the stage — in other words, to write a drama. Now of course the Bible is not concerned with writing plays any more than with writing stories. Still, just as it contains some passages that seize our imaginations, making us inwardly exclaim, What a story! so it contains other passages that strike our imaginations otherwise, making us feel, That would make a play. I can see it on the stage. In a word, some parts of the Bible are strikingly dramatic.

What do we mean by a drama, as distinct from any other kind of story? We mean an action that we should like to see before our eyes. We mean an action that seems to work itself out by people moving and talking together, and especially by the conflict of one human will with another human will. We mean an action leading to results that are not merely brought to a climax, as in a story, but worked out to a fuller conclusion. And

we mean also, though we are usually less conscious of this, an action that can be worked out within the strict limits of a few scenes and a brief time. A long history with many changes of time and place never strikes us as dramatic. It does not come together in our imaginations enough for us to see it together on the stage, as it were in one evening. The story of Joseph, for instance, does not strike us as dramatic. It covers too many years and too many places. We cannot put it together before our imaginations on the stage. But the story of Esther at once strikes us as dramatic. It seems almost a drama as it stands. For the action is carried on by people almost visibly acting and talking; it presents a sharp conflict of wills; and all its events are complicated and resolved in one place — as it were on one scene, within a brief time.

Some passages in this book of Esther almost stage themselves as we read. What dialogue could be more dramatic than the king's with his favourite?

(Esther vi. 1–10)

On that night could not the king sleep; 1
and he commanded to bring the book of
records of the chronicles; and they were
read before the king. And it was found 2
written that Mordecai had told of Bigthana
and Teresh, two of the king's chamber-
lains, the keepers of the door, who sought
to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus.

And the king said, What honour and 3
dignity hath been done to Mordecai for
this?

Then said the king's servants that minis-
tered unto him, There is nothing done for
him.

And the king said, Who is in the court? 4

Now Haman was come into the out-
ward court of the king's house, to speak
unto the king to hang Mordecai on the
gallows that he had prepared for him.
And the king's servants said unto him, 5
Behold, Haman standeth in the court.

And the king said, Let him come in.

So Haman came in. And the king said 6
unto him, What shall be done unto the
man whom the king delighteth to honour?

Now Haman thought in his heart, To

whom would the king delight to do honour more than to myself? And Haman answered the king, For the man whom the king delighteth to honour, let the royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head; and let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man withal whom the king delighteth to honour, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour.

Then the king said to Haman, Make haste, and take the apparel and the horse, as thou hast said, and do even so to Mordecai the Jew, that sitteth at the king's gate. Let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken.

The king is intent of making good the omission of a state duty. Haman is equally intent on his own pride and vengeance. They talk at cross-purposes until Haman is suddenly stunned by a bolt out of the blue.

Not only can he not avoid it, but he cannot even show any feeling. He is caught in a trap of his own vanity. And this dialogue is not only full of zest for a spectator, but also full of significance. It marks a cardinal point in the plot.

Then took Haman the apparel and the 11
horse, and arrayed Mordecai, and brought him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaimed before him, Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour. And Morde- 12
cai came again to the king's gate.

But Haman hasted to his house mourning, and having his head covered. And 13
Haman told Zeresh his wife and all his friends everything that had befallen him. Then said his wise men and Zeresh his wife unto him, If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him.

And while they were yet talking with 14
him came the king's chamberlains, and hasted to bring Haman unto the banquet that Esther had prepared.

This is exactly what we mean by a dramatic situation.

Even more intensely dramatic is the situation to which it leads: —

vii

So the king and Haman came to banquet with Esther the queen. 1

And the king said again unto Esther on the second day at the banquet of wine, What is thy petition, queen Esther? and it shall be granted thee; and what is thy request? and it shall be performed, even to the half of the kingdom. 2

Then Esther the queen answered and said, If I have found favour in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request. For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish. But if we had been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I had held my tongue, although the enemy could not countervail the king's damage. 3 4

Then the king Ahasuerus answered and said unto Esther the queen, Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so? 5

And Esther said, The adversary and 6
enemy is this wicked Haman.

Then Haman was afraid before the king and the queen. And the king arising from the banquet of wine in his wrath went into the palace garden. And Ha- 7
man stood up to make request for his life to Esther the queen; for he saw that there was evil determined against him by the king.

Then the king returned out of the pal- 8
ace garden into the place of the banquet of wine; and Haman was fallen upon the bed whereon Esther was. Then said the king, Will he force the queen also before me in the house?

As the word went out of the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face.

It takes little imagination to picture this splendid scene. The setting of oriental magnificence is indicated in the first chapter: —

(i. 6)

Where were white, green, and blue 6
hangings, fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings and pillars of marble. The beds were of gold and sil-

ver, upon a pavement of red and blue and white and black marble.

Against this background is the passion of Haman, at the summit of his ambition, but burning to break the last bar to his pride; and the passion of Esther, nerving herself to make the supreme stroke for her race. The whole plot is gathered up in this intense moment. We are thrilled even by the reading; but how we should like to see it!

How we should like to see it! That is another way of saying, How dramatic! And the Book of Esther gives us this feeling, not only here and there, but all through. Mordecai's refusal to bow to Haman (chapter iii. 2); Mordecai's lamentation (chapter iv. 1); Esther's "If I perish, I perish" (chapter iv. 16) — all these and many others we put in our imaginations upon the stage. We cannot see in this way the pastoral story of Ruth, nor even the intense story of Absalom; but all the action of Esther seems to

be set up in the eye of the world, visibly upon a stage.

Actually to put the whole upon the stage, as a complete drama, would require a special skill, to be learned neither from the Bible, nor from any other book, but only from special study and practice. Still it is both stimulating and profitable to draw the main lines upon which such a drama might be built. Conceived as a drama of *Esther*, it might be constructed in three acts. Act I would have for its main situations the enthroning of Esther, Mordecai's revelation of the conspiracy against the king's life, and finally Mordecai's refusal to bow to Haman. Act II would develop Haman's plot against the Jews; their dismay at his success, as shown in Mordecai's lament; Mordecai's charge to Esther; as a climax, Esther's great resolution, "If I perish, I perish"; and finally her appearance before the throne. Act III, opening with the scene between the king and Haman, quoted above, would go on to the banquet, the overthrow of Haman,

and the triumph of Esther and her people. In bare outline this seems an entirely feasible plan.

But there is another way of conceiving the drama, which would give it greater fulness and at the same time accord better with the Bible motive. Though the book is entitled *Esther*, it is primarily a national story, a story of the deliverance and triumph of the Jews. It commemorates the establishment of the great national feast Purim. And it may well be conceived as a national drama. This is further suggested by the fact that the clearest and strongest character in the Bible story is Mordecai. Suppose, then, that the drama be entitled *Mordecai the Jew*.

Act I. The play opens in the court of the palace. A great banquet is going on within. Chamberlains pass back and forth, or stand talking. From their talk we learn of popular dislike of the Jews, and also of the advancement of Haman. Enter Mordecai. He evidently knows the palace and has the confidence of the chamberlains. He is a man

of the world and a courtier; but his shrewdness, his courtesy, his whole life, as we are gradually made to see, has one great purpose, to promote the welfare of his people. Mordecai enters with news; but, before disclosing it, he inquires of his friend the chamberlain Hegai concerning his foster-child Esther, whom, as a part of his great purpose, he has introduced into the household. As they talk, the whole court is startled by the news of Vashti's refusal. This naturally suggests to Mordecai an opportunity to realise his plans more quickly. Perhaps, indeed, it is by some plot of his that Vashti has been led to her indiscretion. Still he does not forget his immediate purpose. He denounces the chamberlains Bigthana and Teresh as conspirators, and succeeds in accomplishing their overthrow and the recording of his own name as a public benefactor. But, just at this moment of success, he is confronted by Haman, who is no less bent on plans of his own. Courtier though he is, Mordecai will not bow. The curtain goes down with the

two main characters, the two opposing wills, looking each other in the eye.

Act II proceeds with Haman's rapid success, and unfolds his plot against the Jews. Meantime Mordecai, too, is succeeding. His plans emerge triumphantly in the splendid coronation of Esther. A Jewess is queen. Though Mordecai is careful to conceal her race, he feels none the less secure. Then, by one of those contrasts which are the life of drama, comes the royal proclamation against the whole race. Mordecai is overwhelmed. His enemy passes him once more in triumph. Mordecai will not bow; but he is for the moment dazed by the magnitude of the calamity.

Act III opens with Mordecai in sackcloth and ashes, crying "with a loud and bitter cry." The terror and shame of the whole race is summed up in his tragic lamentation. Ignoring all etiquette, and even the safety of his own life, he cries "even before the king's gate." The next scene, in an inner court, with Esther, reveals the man's great-

ness. Calamity nerves him. He stakes everything upon the intervention of the queen. He nerves her with his own forlorn courage. He inspires her with his spirit. For this scene must be between those two, that the dialogue may express the tragic intensity of the situation, — on the one hand the terrible will in sackcloth and ashes, on the other the beautiful favourite in her pride of silks and perfumes. "Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house more than all the Jews. For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place." It is a sublime faith. "But thou," — he will have no pity on the girl shrinking from death, — "thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed." Then, seeing that he has dominated her, he finally appeals to all that is best in her: "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Esther promises. Mordecai has turned defeat to victory. In the next scene,

to Mordecai and his friends fasting and weeping without, comes the news that Esther has been received by the king. The following scene, the first banquet, is the climax of the play. Haman is at the summit of his ambition. His plot has succeeded. He alone, of all the ambitious courtiers, is bidden to the queen's feast. His pride is satisfied. But while Mordecai is without, hanging upon the issue, the king, suddenly reminded of an omission, asks Haman, "What shall be done to the man that the king delighteth to honour?" Haman, radiant with self-satisfaction, suggests the public honours that he knows must be meant for himself. Swiftly comes the dramatic reverse: "Do even so to Mordecai." The curtain falls again on the two enemies. The shadow of ruin touches Haman; and Mordecai sees hope.

Act IV shows Haman's furious rage culminating in his preparing the gallows. He is shaken; but, reassured by the second invitation, he goes to the banquet with pride unabated and revenge only sharp-

ened by nearer expectation. Then comes the breathless suspense of the dialogue, "What is thy petition, queen Esther?" culminating in the eloquent appeal of Esther, "We are sold, I and my people." A dreadful pause, while the amazed king says, "Who is he?" Then retribution falls — "this wicked Haman." The rest of the act carries out the swift oriental vengeance — "Hang him thereon."

Act V is the full and satisfying conclusion. Mordecai is elevated to higher and higher honour. The king, completely controlled by the will that acts through the queen, gives royal mandate to the Jews to stand for their lives. All their enemies are discomfited; and the play ends with a pageant of national rejoicing.

Without looking for those details of stage presentation which can be mastered only by study and practice in technic, we can discern in such an experiment certain broad dramatic principles. First, a drama proceeds by complication of the plot up to

a certain point, and then by solution. It tangles purposes, so to speak, and then disentangles. And the solution may be as long as the complication. That is, the climax, instead of coming at the end, as in a story, is quite as likely to come in the middle. For in a drama we usually like to see the action, not only worked up, as in a story, but also worked out. In a story the action usually rises and then stops. The climax is so handled as to be also the conclusion, or to imply a conclusion that we do not greatly care to read. In a drama the action usually rises and then falls. The interest, of course, must be kept throughout; but the critical situation is in the middle. There the fortunes of the main characters turn, from bad to good, from good to bad; and our interest after that is in seeing just how the doom will work out.

Again, the very marrow of this rising and falling action is the conflict of two wills. The core of this drama is the character and

action of Mordecai pitted against the character and action of Haman. That is the motive power. It is what makes the several situations dramatic; it is what gives the dialogue life; it is what keeps the whole play moving. We are continually alert to see what each will do to the other.

Finally, to make a story dramatic, to turn it into a play, usually compels the crowding of it into very small limits of place and time. It is no small part of the fitness of this story, as it stands, for presentation on the stage, that most of it happens in or near a single palace. But actually to put it on the stage would involve the omission of some events and the transposition of others. The journeys of the king's messengers to distant provinces, for instance, and the action of the Jews in those provinces would not be visibly represented. So to do would be only to distract attention; and it would be quite unnecessary, for all this could be made plain enough by what is said and done on the main scene of action. It would be quite

feasible also not to change the scene to Haman's house for the sake of a dialogue between him and his wife Zeresh. Her influence also could be brought out in the same way as the episode of the messengers. But the principle need not be carried out so strictly. It means simply to focus attention by avoiding frequent or unnecessary changes of scene.

The same principle holds true of time. The main action of the story as it is told in the Bible (chapters iii to vii) covers only five days. It is quite possible, and it would be a gain for dramatic intensity, to confine the whole drama within these limits. To make the time cover the actual historical time of chapters viii and ix would be to make it a whole year; to cover the actual historical time of chapters i and ii would add several years more. This would not make the play seem any more real. In fact, the play would seem less real; for the imagination would have to bridge gaps between acts and scenes, instead of being

carried on rapidly. A play is not an historical document. By its very nature it involves compression. Events separated by place and time have to be brought together, because we have to see them on a single stage in a few hours. To leave long lapses may weaken or destroy the sense of progress without which a play falls into a mere set of detached scenes without any singleness of effect. To bring them together is a mere necessity toward that effect on which every play must depend for its success — the illusion of real life.

CHAPTER IV

HOW TO DESCRIBE

A. THE TWO KINDS OF DESCRIPTION

THE word *describe* or *description* carries two meanings. It may mean to specify carefully in detail, as in the description of the tabernacle (Exodus xxv. 9-13).

According to all that I shew thee, after 9
the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it. And they shall make
an ark of shittim wood. Two cubits and a 10
half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof. And thou 11
shalt overlay it with pure gold. Within and without shalt thou overlay it, and shalt make upon it a crown of gold round about. And thou shalt cast four rings of 12
gold for it, and put them in the four cor-

ners thereof; and two rings shall be in the one side of it, and two rings in the other side of it. And thou shalt make staves of 13
shittim wood, and overlay them with gold.

Or again it may mean to suggest images, to call up pictures in imagination, as in this figure of the eagle (Deuteronomy xxxii. 11).

As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings.

The former kind of description requires accuracy. The words must be precise. The directions for the tabernacle are very like an architect's specifications for a house. They must be so precise that the builder cannot misunderstand. Therefore this kind of description is often supplemented by drawings. The other kind of description, too, requires accuracy; but it requires something more — vividness. The words must be suggestive. They must kindle the imagination. The former kind often makes part of an

essay; for it is really a kind of explanation. The latter kind more often makes part of a story; for, like the rest of a story, it appeals to the imagination. But either kind may occur in speech or essay or story.

B. THE STUDY OF DESCRIPTION AS THE STUDY OF WORDS

Thus it is plain at the start that description is not a separate kind of writing, but only an ingredient mixed into speech or essay or story. It has no form peculiar to itself; it fits into the form with which it is used. Therefore the guiding principles of the preceding chapters — fixing one point, taking hold, etc., have no direct application to description. Indirectly, of course, they apply by controlling the whole of which the description is a part; but since to set forth such applications would bring out nothing new, we may dismiss these principles when we study what is peculiar to description. Properly and peculiarly, then, the study of

description is a study, not so much of the larger groups, such as paragraphs, nor even of smaller groups, such as sentences, but rather of separate words and phrases. The proper study of description is to find the right word.

I. The Right Word as the Precise Word

The right word in the explanatory kind of description, as we have seen, is the precise word, the exact word. It comes from being strict with oneself, from patient use of the dictionary, and from having a large store of words. The books of the New Testament that are nicest in distinctions of words are the epistles of St. Paul; for he was the most learned of the apostles, the widest in his reading. His precision of phrase, though it can be fully appreciated, of course, only in the original Greek, appears even in the English translation, as for instance in the description of the workings of charity (page 77) and in the careful distinctions throughout the Epistle to the Romans.

But the whole English Bible is a practical model of precision. Whatever defects of rendering there may be here and there are due largely to the limitations of language. As says the *Prologue of the Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach* (Ecclesiasticus):—

Pardon us wherein we may seem to come short of some words which we have laboured to interpret. For the same things uttered in Hebrew and translated into another tongue have not the same force in them.

Successive revisions, as they have added nothing to the beauty, have added surprisingly little to the accuracy of what scholars call the Authorised Version, what we call the English Bible. Subsequent changes in rendering are due in many cases to changes in our own language since the time of King James. This means that the translators of that time honestly did their best. They "laboured to interpret." They patiently tried to find the right word. Our own lack of precision in writing is due chiefly to

laziness or hurry. We take up with the handiest word instead of searching for the right one. And indeed, for any one who studies it from this point of view, part of the moral influence of the English Bible is strict honesty in writing, a growing sense of responsibility for the right word.

(*a*) THE STUDY OF PRECISION THROUGH TRANSLATION

Incidentally there is a valuable hint for whoever knows any other language than his mother tongue. One of the best means toward gaining a store of words and nicety in the use of them is translation. To render French or Spanish or German, or any other foreign tongue, into English, and then patiently to test the faithfulness of each word, and further to make the whole sound like the native tongue instead of blundering between the two, and then finally to try for something of the original spirit and force, — all this directly increases one's practical mastery of precision. And since

the Bible has been translated into all languages, this sort of study may be varied by comparing two versions of the same passage.

(*b*) THE STUDY OF PRECISION THROUGH MEMORISING

And the study to have the right word can be carried on through the English Bible by those who know no other language. One of the best ways to increase the store of words and the sense of their exact values is memorising. This simple and obvious method is unfortunately less common than in the days of our grandfathers. Yet there is no better corrective of random looseness, no better antidote for that shallow fluency which may pass for a while as good writing, but never gains firm mastery of words. Our choice of words is influenced unconsciously, but very largely, by what we habitually read. If we read little except newspapers and magazines, our words will not range beyond the talk of the day. If

we make ourselves familiar with writing that has stood the test of time, our own writing will become — bookish? No, it is a mistake to suppose that. Rather it will become, on the one hand homelier and stronger, and on the other hand more precise. If any one doubts this, he may find it attested by the recorded experience of most men of letters. And the model that, more than any other, has helped them to find and form their own styles is the English Bible. The simple way by which, more than any other, this model has been made practically effective is memorising.

II. The Right Word as the Specific and Concrete Word

Precision, then, is the foundation of all rightness in the choice of words. But when description aims, not merely to explain, but also to suggest images, precision is not enough. That is, when we attempt that other and commoner sort of description (page 163) which appeals, not merely to the

intellect, but also to the imagination, we must choose our words accordingly. "When the children of Ammon," says the translation of the First Book of Chronicles (xix. 6), "saw that they had made themselves odious to David . . . the children of Ammon sent . . . to hire them chariots and horsemen out of Mesopotamia." The same situation is described in the Second Book of Samuel (x. 6); but the effect is different because of the difference in a single word: "When the children of Ammon saw that they *stank* before David," etc. "Had made themselves odious" is precise; it satisfies the mind; but "stank" is a stronger word. Stronger? What do we mean by saying that a word is stronger? It is a homelier word. Some of us to-day may even find it too homely. But certainly it makes more impression. It brings the fact home (pages 20, 89). It strikes the imagination. It makes us, not merely comprehend, but almost see. And, as we have already observed, the words that do this are words that directly suggest sensa-

tions. They are words of particular sounds, motions, attitudes, colours, smells. Such words are called concrete and specific, as distinguished from words like "odious," which are abstract and general. The stronger word is usually the more concrete and specific word. And since the object of that kind of description which we are now considering is to kindle the imagination, to bring the fact home, — in a word, to be strong, naturally its habit of words is specific and concrete.

Concrete and specific words are so strongly descriptive that some of the best-remembered passages throughout the Old Testament have fastened themselves upon our minds for this reason. The doom of mankind is thus written (Genesis iii. 19): —

In the *sweat* of thy *face* shalt thou *eat bread*, till thou return unto the *ground*; for out of it wast thou taken. For *dust* thou art, and unto *dust* shalt thou return.

The exile of Hagar makes a picture (Genesis xxi. 14): —

And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away —

and the same method pictures the meeting (page 121) of Abraham's servant with Rebekah (Genesis xxiv): —

And he made his camels to kneel down 11
without the city by a well of water at the
time of the evening, even the time when
women go out to draw water.
And she said, Drink, my lord; and she 18
hasted, and let down her pitcher upon her
hand, and gave him drink.
And the man came into the house. 32
And he ungirded his camels, and gave
straw and provender for the camels, and
water to wash his feet and the men's feet
that were with him.

The completeness of the possession of the promised land is brought home by the words of the promise (Joshua i. 3): —

Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses —

and, in the same way, the subjection of the Gibeonites (Joshua ix. 21):—

And the princes said unto them, Let them live; but let them be hewers of wood and drawers of water unto all the congregation.

Poverty is a vague, general term. Famine is more specific, and therefore more suggestive. But what famine really means the words of the widow of Zarephath make us feel (1 Kings xvii. 12):—

And she said, As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but a handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse; and behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die.

The triumphant honour of Mordecai is expressed for us, not merely to know, but to feel by seeing (Esther viii. 15):—

And Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a garment of fine linen and purple.

And the suggestive force of the concrete is felt nowhere more keenly than in the description of Esther's banquet (see page 149).

As the word went out of the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face.

(*a*) FIGURES OF SPEECH

The first of these passages and the last one show that the concrete and specific are often used, not only as literal description, but also as symbols. "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread" does more than merely picture Adam's actual toil; it is a symbol of the labour of humanity, the struggle for life. "They covered Haman's face" does more than merely picture a particular action. It is a symbol of Haman's doom. Without further explanation we know that his end had come. And we all make greater or less use of the concrete and specific, not as literal, but as symbolic. Such a use of words is called a figure of speech. We all use figures of speech to make our

expressions stronger. We say, "He had to sweat for that," as a stronger way of saying that he had to make great efforts. We say a child is "lively as a cricket," in order to stimulate our hearer's imagination by a comparison. We even dispense with the words of comparison, merely implying them: "That child is a cricket." Figures of speech are natural means of liveliness.

As a matter of temperament, some people use more figures than others. Things appeal to them more pictorially. They are more imaginative. And the same is true of whole races. Orientals are usually more figurative than the colder western and northern races. That is one reason for the abundance of figures in the Old Testament. The Hebrews had a racial habit of figures. This oriental character of the Bible stands out most strikingly in *The Song of Solomon*; but it appears in all the other poetical books, such as the *Psalms* and *Prophets*, and, in lesser degree, throughout the Old Testament. Rehoboam speaks in figures to the deputation

that waited upon him at his accession to the throne (1 Kings xii. 10–11):—

And the young men that were grown up with him spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt thou speak unto this people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy; but make thou it lighter unto us,—thus shalt thou say unto them, My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins. And now whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke. My father hath chastised you with whips; but I will chastise you with scorpions.

And the natural expression of Hebrew poetry is seen in this description of the war-horse (Job xxxix. 19–25):—

Hast thou given the horse strength? Hast thou clothed his neck with thunder? Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper? The glory of his nostrils is terrible. He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength. He goeth on to meet the armed men. He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted; neither turneth he back from the sword. The quiver rattleth against him, the

glittering spear and the shield. He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage; neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet. He saith among the trumpets, Ha, ha! and he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting.

This is splendid; but in prose, and by a modern man speaking English, it would seem extravagant, because it would seem unnatural. There at once we see a strict limit to the use of figures. They must always be natural to the writer and the occasion. Else, instead of being strong, they will be weak or even ridiculous. Any expression that sounds artificial — and by that we mean any expression that seems to be lugged in for its own sake — can never be really strong; for, instead of kindling the reader's imagination, it will then distract his attention by offending his taste.

Besides, it is a mistake to suppose that figures are necessary to strength. They may, indeed, be a means of strength; but

they are not a necessary means. The figurative use of the specific and concrete is strong sometimes; it is the literal use that is strong always. Those oft-quoted words of Job (xix. 26) —

And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God —

may be taken figuratively; but they were doubtless intended literally. And even Hebrew poetry often gets its picturesque force literally (Psalm civ. 10–18): —

He sendeth the springs into the valleys, which run among the hills. They give drink to every beast of the field: the wild asses quench their thirst. By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation, which sing among the branches. He watereth the hills from his chambers: the earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works. He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man; that he may bring forth food out of the earth, and wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth

man's heart. The trees of the Lord are full of sap; the cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted. There the birds make their nests: as for the stork, the fir trees are her house. The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats; and the rocks for the conies.

The moral for the modern student is to put away the notion that he cannot be strong without figures, and to depend in most cases rather upon the literal.

III. The Right Word as Personal

(*a*) SINCERE EXPRESSION

The moral is deeper than that. It is not to use any means of strength that one cannot use naturally. Take this as a parable for writing (1 Samuel xvii. 38–39):—

And Saul armed David with his armour; and he put a helmet of brass upon his head; also he armed him with a coat of mail. And David girded his sword upon his armour, and he assayed to go; for he had not proved it. And David said unto Saul, I cannot go

with these; for I have not proved them. And David put them off him.

At bottom, strength of expression is power to express oneself. The greatest single lesson, perhaps, that the Bible teaches concerning the use of words is sincerity. The literary force of the Bible, even in translation, consists mainly in its sincerity. Its writers were overpowered by what they had to say. How they were to say it meant to them only and singly how to deliver the message, how to bring it home. They did not think whether this or that expression would give pleasure, but only whether it would give truth. And at bottom all the best writing is controlled by that honest purpose to tell the truth. The best writers will not turn aside to make us wonder at a phrase; they are too much wrapped up in the intention to make us see and feel what they see and feel.

So the object in studying how they chose their words to fulfil this sincere purpose is only to enable you to fulfil your own sin-

cere purpose. The study of models is not copying. It is not carrying away phrases to patch on your own work. It is a study of method. It is an examination of the ways in which their message is expressed so clearly and so strongly. I will not use the apostle's phrase "sounding brass and tinkling cymbal" (page 77); for it is not mine. It does not sound like me. But I will remember that a figure of speech — some other figure equally simple, and more natural to me — may help me to put some abstract idea of mine more strongly. I will not say "a land flowing with milk and honey" (Exodus iii. 8); but, because I have learned the force of that way of talking (see pages 20, 89), I may speak of *alkali* and *sage-brush* instead of using some vague general term like *desert*, or *desolation*, or *barrenness*. And, in fact, this is precisely how the Bible has served as a model of style, not only in later times, but even to some of the Biblical writers themselves. The expression of the apostles is often enlivened by turns of phrase learned from the prophets. Natu-

rally they often quote from the earlier scriptures; but, quite beyond mere quotation, their preaching is enlivened and enforced by their familiarity with Isaiah and Habbakkuk, with Amos and Malachi. They did not copy. They were not trying to put in patches of style. They were too sincere for anything of that sort. But they did learn from the Bible how to write.

(*b*) ORIGINAL EXPRESSION

And this expressing of oneself personally has another aspect than sincerity. To express oneself personally is the way of sincerity; it is also the way of distinction. If I describe a scene just as everybody else describes it, I shall hardly be sincere — unless I was so unfortunate as to see only what everybody saw — and I shall certainly be dull. What makes a writer interesting is usually some expression of himself. It is oftener this than any novelty of experience. The letters that you enjoy most do not come, probably, from Morocco or China. They tell no marvels.

They talk of such things as you yourself have about you daily. But they make these common things interesting by expressing their significance to the writer. An incident may seem significant or insignificant according to the way in which it is expressed. Some people will so describe marketing, or a railway journey, or labourers in a ditch, as to hold attention and awaken feeling. These are the people whose talk we seek, whose letters we look for; and the best of them are those whose books we read. They compel attention, they win distinction, by expressing themselves.

Can the rest of us learn their art? Most people cannot be original in speech, because they do not really wish to express themselves. Most people are content to talk like their neighbours. They do not covet distinction. But some can. Indeed, it might be said with little exaggeration that all can who will. For the very impulse to express oneself is one sign of capacity. It is only just to assume that all who read this book have

impulse enough to carry them out of the commonplace. And, given the impulse, the rest can be learned.

Of the rest that is to be learned, the first part of originality is observation. Our interesting friends see and hear what we miss. What the prophet meant figuratively, of moral dulness, might be taken of many people literally (Isaiah vi. 10, as quoted in Acts xxviii. 27):—

> The heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed.

Their talk is dull because their life is dull. They are half dumb because they are half deaf and half blind. They do not mark how the rain booms on a great stretch of wooden roof, hisses in dry grass, drums on a window, chuckles in a drain. For them it is only rain, a very ordinary matter, not worth any more attention than "Wet day!" or "Bad weather!" "Is it going to clear before night?" A dull city company at table on a

rainy day, after exchanging sad words like this, may be much enlivened by the teacher who tells of the attitudes of school children struggling with umbrellas at gusty corners, laughing in high trebles, of smoke torn in shreds from high chimneys, of the policeman's glistening cloak, of the sodden smell of crowded cars, of a newsboy covered with an old sack, of the lines of downpour slanting across the park and the shifting lines of the trees beneath, — even of such smaller things as the whipping of puddles across the smooth asphalt, — in a word, of actual seeing and hearing. The rest of the company wonder again how so much can be made of so little; but the same interest will be open to them just in proportion as they train their own senses.

(Job xxviii. 7–11)

There is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen. The lion's whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it. He putteth forth his hand upon the rock; he over-

turneth the mountains by the roots. He cutteth out rivers among the rocks; and his eye seeth every precious thing. He bindeth the floods from overflowing; and the thing that is hid bringeth he forth to life.

How profound an observation of the larger processes of nature, and how deep a significance! So Psalm civ (page 178) expresses the joy of life in the good gifts of the material world. For it is not merely the physical impressions that need to be cultivated; it is their significance. Dulness is not merely of ear and eye, but of heart. "The heart of this people is waxed gross." The fundamental interest of writing, because it is the fundamental interest of life, is human interest. And human interest is infinitely large and manifold, and inexhaustibly new for each observer. A smile, the large gesture of a fruit-pedler, a babe asleep in a washerwoman's lap, a scrap of conversation between two labourers, the hard mechanical replies of a ticket-seller, the bare muscles of a man feeding a threshing machine, the

pallor of a shop girl — things too small to be noticed by gross hearts — are eloquent to a sympathetic observer of human nature, and will become significant in his expression.

Not only is life so changed for each generation as to need new interpretation of old emotions in their new guise, but it has its fresh significance for each individual observer. Even if all cultivated and trained their observation, still all would not talk alike, would not say the same words, would not receive the same impressions. For no two of us can receive exactly the same impressions. Each according to his physical aptitude is more keenly aware of some parts of the manifold throng of impressions than of others. You see the lines of rain and smoke and leaning pedestrians, while I rather hear the watery swirl, or smell the washed air. And the suggestions from these sensations also differ with the individual bent. The laughter of the struggling children suggests to one the joy of abundant young life, to another its carelessness, to another its

escape from crowded tenements. And if each one describes as he himself sees and hears and feels, if he is faithful to his own impressions and suggestions, he is in the way of describing differently; he is in the way of distinction, the way of originality.

Our English Bible, being a translation, of course cannot keep all the personal quality of the original (see page 166). But the faithful endeavour to render the spirit and feeling of the original, as part of its meaning, evidently gave the translators so unusual an impulse toward style that their rendering became itself a masterpiece of expression. They came, that is, remarkably near to translating style; and they achieved a style of their own. So their translation, for thousands of people ignorant of the original tongues, has been very fitly a model of expression. Though they were not expressing themselves, they so entered into sympathy with what they sought to express as to give their writing that which is the foundation of style, — personal tone.

Living in the same world, using the same language, all who will may thus attain some measure of personal expression. What to one man is *sharp* to another is *shrewd*, to another *biting*, to another *corrosive*. And the faithful attempt to find the right word brings gradually both more words to choose from and keener sense of their values. But observe that the right word is the word that is right for you, the word that suggests at once the particular physical aspect to your senses and at the same time the significance to your feeling. The right word for you is the word that is in tune with your impression. *Biting* may not be right for you, because you wish to convey rather the impression of stimulus. The wind was *biting*. to your companion; but to you it was *keen* or *eager*. It *stung* his blood; but it made your blood *dance*. Almost every word thus carries with it, beside its literal, dictionary meaning, associations that make it right or wrong for a particular impression. That strong word *stank* (page 170) would be too

strong for some places. It would not do. It would jar upon an impression of restraint. It would be out of tune. Moreover, the associations of some words have changed with the times. The psalmist's cry, "I have *roared* by reason of the disquietness of my heart" (Psalm xxxviii. 8), gives us now the wrong association. In its figurative use we now associate the word *roar* with humour rather than with pathos. It makes us smile. So the Bible word *naughty*, since we associate it now with wayward children, makes us smile sometimes at solemn passages. The right word, then, is the word that has both the precise meaning and also the right association.

IV. The Right Word as the Homely and Simple Word

Since our modern speech has lost something in liveliness by the neglect of old familiar words, the study of the homely language of the Bible is a tonic for tameness. The homely word is not right always, but it is often. As the study of the English

Bible increases the range of vocabulary in general, so it stimulates in particular the use of homely words for homely facts.

(Genesis xlix. 33)

And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people.

No finer language could make that more impressive. Even the poetic figures of the Bible often have a startling homeliness.

(Job xxxviii. 8–9)

Or who shut up the sea with doors, when it brake forth, as if it had issued out of the womb; when I made the cloud the garment thereof, and thick darkness a swaddling band for it?

And so have many passages of concrete literalness, such as Psalm civ (page 178).

Another aspect of this homeliness is simplicity. We are sometimes led to believe that the deeper emotions, the facts of great

import, will be made more significant by fine long words. The English Bible teaches us quite otherwise. The cry of David at the end of the day (page 110) we feel as the right expression of his agony. Yet it is altogether simple. Like it is the cry of Esau (Genesis xxvii. 34)—

And when Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father, Bless me, even me also, O my father—

and the resolution of Esther (Esther iv. 16)—

Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day. I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law. And if I perish, I perish.

The most extended example of the force of simplicity is the Book of Ruth. The deep human pathos and joy of this pastoral

story are enhanced, not by any high-sounding phrase, but by strictly keeping to such words as we all learned from our mothers (Ruth i. 8–17):—

And Naomi said unto her two daughters 8
in law, Go, return each to her mother's
house. The Lord deal kindly with you,
as ye have dealt with the dead, and with
me. The Lord grant you that ye may 9
find rest, each of you in the house of her
husband. Then she kissed them; and
they lifted up their voice, and wept. And 10
they said unto her, Surely we will return
with thee unto thy people. And Naomi 11
said, Turn again, my daughters. Why
will ye go with me? Are there yet any
more sons in my womb, that they may be
your husbands? Turn again, my daugh- 12
ters; go your way; for I am too old to
have an husband. If I should say, I have
hope; if I should have an husband also
to-night, and should also bear sons;
would ye tarry for them till they were 13
grown? Would ye stay for them from
having husbands? Nay, my daughters;
for it grieveth me much for your sakes

that the hand of the Lord is gone out against me. And they lifted up their 14
voice, and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law; but Ruth clave unto her. And she said, Behold, thy sister-in- 15
law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods. Return thou after thy sister-in-law. And Ruth said, Entreat 16
me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee. For whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge. Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where 17
thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me.

What scene in literature is more affecting? And what is described more simply?

If such effects are to be had simply, it may seem easy to write, so soon as one has caught this idea. But it is not easy; for they are not to be had simply. They are simple; but they cost labour. It is no easier to write simply than to live simply. Both require courage and perseverance.

Simple writing is to be found rather in great books than in newspapers, and rather in the mature than in the young. It comes from faithful striving. Some natures seem to have an inborn knack for it. These acquire it faster; but even these must confirm the tendency in a habit. The way is primarily to put aside all affectation, all use of words for their own sake; to fix one's attention more and more strictly on what he is trying to say; to try to make the words more and more like a transparent medium. Not much progress can well be made until the elementary principles of writing, the principles set forth in the preceding chapters of this book, have become so familiar by practice as to be instinctive, — until, that is, a writer is not balked and brought to a stand by ignorance of how to express his thought and feeling at all. But even at the start the ideal of simplicity is salutary; for its influence is like the influence of that larger ideal which includes all that is best worth striving for in ex-

pression — sincerity. Most men, if they honestly study to make their expression correspond more and more to a sincere intention, will find themselves gaining more and more of the ability to be simple.

V. The Right Word as the Apt Word

The ability to be simple, not the necessity. Simplicity is not always possible. The Epistle to the Romans cannot say simply what it has to say. What has to be expressed — and that includes the emotion and mood as well as the thought — controls the whole way of expressing it. Writing is a means to an end; and the end controls the means. Therefore the only constant quality of style is sincerity. For the rest, just as the form varies with the kind, for speech or essay or story (page 133), so the choice of words. The style of the Book of Ruth is as different as can be from the style of Isaiah. Of course the difference is primarily a difference of authors. It is interesting to mark the differences of style, even in translation,

between an epistle of St. Paul, for instance, and one of St. James or St. John. It is a difference of personality. But the same author will write quite differently in different forms for different ends. St. Paul's familiar Epistle to Philemon differs widely in style from his doctrinal Epistle to the Romans. And part of the practice of writing for us all must be directed toward such adaptation. We must beware of fixing our expression in mannerisms. We must learn to choose words whose associations are right (page 189), not only for us individually, but also for the occasion. The most convenient practice toward this end is afforded daily by letters. To make every letter a study in aptness of words, not to let it go till it suits the person and the theme and the time, is to make sure and steady gain in writing.

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